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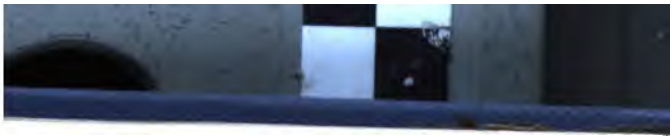

THE VANDAL

OR

HALF A CHRISTIAN

A NOVEL ON

IRISH-AMERICAN LIFE

BY

WILLIAM J. LUBY

CHICAGO

J. S. HYLAND AND COMPANY

1909

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BY

WILLIAM J. LUBY

DEDICATION

THIS HUMBLE EFFORT IS LOVINGLY
DEDICATED TO MY SISTERS,
MARGARET AND ANNA,
TO WHOSE LENIENT CRITICISM AND
GENTLE ENCOURAGEMENT THE WORK
OWES ITS
PRESUMPTUOUS EXISTENCE.

53X32

Nihil Obstat,

F. X. STEINBRECHER,

Censor Deputatus

INTRODUCTION

With the hope that this volume may find a place on the limited shelf of the family library, the author has dared to present it to the consideration of the reading public. The Catholic story is a total stranger in the homes of many of our people, while the Catholic paper, in spite of its noble effort and its literary merit, is forced to struggle for a penurious existence even among those who demand generous space to emblazon their own social prestige. The visitor to some of our grand public libraries can impose no greater task upon the willing attendant than to request him to find a particular Catholic book, for the simple reason that it is like the proverbial needle lost in the stack of modern literature. The Catholic book is the only literary orphan of the day, patiently awaiting adoption in the abode of the private family and the public library. The blame we must carry on our own shoulders.

Trusting that this humble effort may help to start another shelf of Catholic books in some of our public institutions, the writer has presumed to impose it upon the public clemency. Mindful of the arid atmosphere of a strictly religious treatise, we have attempted to present some of the religious questions of the day under the cloak of romance. We dare not hope that the work will intrude upon the company of the Catholic classics, but we trust that it will lend somewhat of instruction as well as pleasure to the leisure moments of the reader, upon whose lenient criticism our humble effort will depend for its presumptuous existence.

THE AUTHOR.

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The Vandal; or, Half a Christian

CHAPTER I.

A BUSINESS VENTURE.

THE DISTANT town clock had just ceased striking midnight, breaking the solemn silence of the hour with its deep mellow voice as though to warn the owner of a solitary light that shone from a garret window nearby that it was time long since for rest The little gleam which boldly crept out into the darkness was a continual offender in this regard. Many a time had the old clock groaned out its longest breath in vain, only to find the same solitary light burning, even in the small hours of the misty morning. To the night-watch of that district of the great city of London, this same light had been the source of much conjecture. "Good people," he was wont to say, "do not need the cover of darkness for their labors."

In spite, however, of the frequent warnings of the old clock and the many perturbing thoughts of the town officer, the tiny gas-jet in this particular garret continually assailed the outer darkness in its midnight vigil. It remained only for the old landlady of the house to issue her mandate to quiet the troubled thoughts of the night-watch. This mandate came one morning after the gas-meter had begun to read entirely too fast for the good lady's purse.

"Good morning, sir, I'm hoping you had a good night's rest last night; but I'm very much afraid you did not get it in sleep. Now, my dear friend, I'm not for hurting any decent man's feelings, but I must be raisin' a cry agen' anyone making me pay for their carousals. If you were apt now in payin' your rent every fortnight, I'd be willin' to close my eyes with the gas burning all night, but your rent has not been in these hands for two months or more, so I'm not going to let it by any longer. So now, my bright blossom of an artist, you'll have to settle before you sit to table in my house agen'."

After lifting that terrible strain off her mind, she folded her arms and stood glaring at the object of her wrath with a frown too eloquent to pass unnoticed.

"Now, Aunt Liza," said the offended artist, assuming the mien of the penitent, "who would ever think to look at those motherly eyes of yours, that you could fire off like that. It's too bad you're not in politics, for I'm sure the world would hear from you before long."

"Well, my laddy, I'm not afraid to tell you that I'm a decent woman and I pay my honest debts, and I don't have the collectors naggin' me for their pay—that's more than some of my near neighbors can say."

"But now, Auntie," said the boarder in a coaxing tone, "wait just another day. You have me now with neither a farthing nor an argument to offer you, but I'm going to pay all my debts as soon as I sell my next picture,—you know it's hard to make a living in London when a fellow has no name."

"I reckon it is hard," answered the old lady in a more motherly tone, prompted by the prospect of the forthcoming rent, "and I'm not the woman to let you go without

your breakfast this morning. Your bun and your sliver of bacon will be waiting for you before you go out. Don't you know, child, that the gas bill grows when people stay up all night. Let the light of God's sun be enough for you—He won't charge us for that."

"Ah, I knew your heart was good, Aunty," answered the young artist, "You will not have to wait for your money very long if I can help it, for if I do not sell a picture today, I will give up the brush entirely and try to make a living with the shovel. It's been nothing but grind, grind, grind, all the time here and nothing to show for my time." With that he went into the room which presumption had christened the "dining room," and proceeded to nourish his tired body with the meagre fare.

How many a morning had he felt his way down the dingy hallway to go out and face the cold, heartless world in search of the price of life, seeking in the smoke and fog of the busy city of London the man with the artistic soul and the generous purse. What gilt-edged hopes welled in his heart as he dragged his feet down the well-worn stairway, while under his arm he carried the canvas which might be a diamond in the rough—a masterpiece, to startle the slumbering throng. The days came and went, and yet the lady of fortune disdained to smile on the young artist, while the spectre of poverty and starvation ever dwelt in the shadow of his easel. The world at large continued to shower its favors on the less deserving and less industrious, but for Ned Lanning the dawn of success was ever in the distant obscurity.

Discontent began to breed melancholy and despair in his heart, until the irony of the situation began to wear upon his physical as well as his mental being, causing him

sometimes to hate his very existence. The indulgence of a motherly landlady was all that stood between him and starvation. "The man who can bury all sense of justice and honesty," thought he, more than once, "seems to have no trouble in winning the esteem of the world. Here I am trying with every nerve to secure enough to keep body and soul together, and what a cruel farce, what a miserable failure! Art—I may as well be out fishing in the park lagoon as to be mixing colors day after day." Lanning soon found that troublesome thoughts were not the best elements with which to nourish a tired body, as the trace of worry now began to appear in his young face.

He was not an exceptionally talented artist, although he was a clean, hard-working young man whose toil did not reap the harvest it deserved. His work with the brush had not yet led the indifferent public to look for his name in the corner of his paintings, whether from a want of art or a want of money, it was hard to say. The man who is an artist for art's sake alone is the exception rather than the rule, because poverty is a poor room-mate for one who has so much time for musing as the man with the brush. Lanning's art lacked not a few touches of the master hand, but the love for his work was measured by the healthy condition of his purse.

Finding that he was not attracting the attention of his fellow men sufficiently to insure his comfort, and noting that the glory of his childhood dreams was still lost in the cloud of oblivion, in spite of his best effort, the discontented artist cast everything to one side on a certain day and declared a council of war with himself.

One week after this consultation with his better judgment, we find the hero of the story seated under the shadow of an imposing sign, emblazoning to the passing throngs the following, "Lanning & Co., Decorator & Painter." The horror of the thought of becoming a mere painter—a house-painter—at first deterred our hero from making the present venture, but pride and poverty were bitter enemies, and the influence of the latter prevailed with the result just mentioned.

The board sign in question was the product of the hand which had been trained to copy the old masters, and it hung low over the heads of the passersby to insure a passing glance. People looked at it, not so much from admiration, as from a fear that it would fall upon their precious persons. Over in "Calico Row," Lanning was the artist in his studio; here in the busier part of London he was merely the painter in his shop, awaiting the prospect of a brighter day.

One morning after a few days of waiting, his pulse began to beat more rapidly than usual, when he saw an elderly gentleman enter his door, after fumbling at the latch for what seemed an age. The proprietor strove to assume the appearance of being busily occupied at a table which boasted of several letter heads and a bottle of ink, while a nail on the wall served at a file for the supposed accounts.

"Good morning, sir. Are you Mr. Lanning?" inquired the first customer in a pleasant tone of voice. Without waiting for an answer, he continued, "I came in here to see the owner of that big sign over the door bearing the name of 'Lanning.' I have a feeling of curiosity whenever I meet any of that name, owing perhaps to the

fact that my mother's maiden name was Lanning. On the other hand I have a little business to transact also. I am Father Colton of Saint John's church not far from here, and I stepped in to see if you would come over and examine the interior, as I intend to have it decorated. The building itself is one of the oldest in the city of London and I am afraid the walls are not in the best condition for fresco. Can I depend on you to look into the matter tomorrow?"

"My dear sir, I shall be only too glad to accommodate you, as my time is all my own just at present. Do you know, sir—I mean Father—that you are the first person who ever came to my door of his own free will to patronize me? It seems good to have a man come in and make you feel that you are able to do something. Heretofore I've had a hard time to convince people that I am capable of doing honest work and good work, so you will find in me a very willing man."

"Well, my young friend," answered the priest, amazed at the unsolicited information, "I am glad to be of service to you, and I trust we can come to a reasonable agreement in the matter."

"Thank you, Father," answered Lanning.

"Moreover," continued the priest, "I like your face, and pride myself on my ability to read character as shown in the features. I must congratulate you on that big sign over your door, one cannot but notice it in passing. The good old Irish name 'Lanning' was somewhat of a surprise to me as I did not expect to find it in London. I like to become acquainted with the possessors of Irish names, especially as we are all related in a spir-

itual way, possessing the same holy mother, the Catholic Church."

"Excuse me, Father, for the interruption, but I am not a Catholic. In fact I have no religion at all except what little I may express in my work while copying the old masters. And"—fear lest he had already closed the door on his first customer suddenly reminded the uneasy proprietor that he had said too much.

"Continue, Mr. Lanning, please. I prefer to have you outspoken with me. I would like very much to hear the remainder of that 'And.'"

"I am afraid, Father, that I have said too much already for a good business man," answered the doubtful artist. "I am everlastingly killing my chances by foolish statements; that's what keeps me where I am." "We are not talking business now, Mr. Lanning," answered the priest. "That little matter is already settled between us. We are talking now as man to man."

"To be honest with you, Father, I will admit that I was afraid that if you found I was not a Catholic it would influence you against me. One's impressions will imprudently be asserted at times, even to the detriment of one's purse. However, I must tell you that my father was a good Catholic, and a better man could not be found in the little city of Cashel, where I was born. My mother belonged to no church in particular, but she had a leaning toward the church of England. In me you find what you might call a religious orphan, without even a leaning. My parents are both dead and I am here in London to fight the battle for bread and butter and I must tell you, Father, it is pretty hard to get."

"Mr. Lanning, had you concealed from me that you were not a Catholic, and left me under a wrong impression by trying to act the hypocrite, I would cease to have any business relations with you on learning the truth. I am glad to be able to refute a very common saying of the day, that we priests are a selfish and bigoted lot. 'Tis true that we can be accused of selfishness when we are striving to preserve the precious treasure of religion from those who would force it from our hearts; bigoted, we may be, in trying to avoid the ravagers of our spiritual wealth, but that we think of none but our own, I must deny. We are often advertised as consigning all who differ from us to eternal ruin, but the accuser is again wrong. I am not here, however, to give a religious dissertation, I am here on business, and I hope we can agree on the work I require."

"Father, I cannot express the respect I feel for you. Your little visit to me this morning may mean more to me than simply a business venture. When shall I have my bid for the work ready?"

"Mr. Lanning," said the priest, "The contract is not large enough for competition, and I am sure your work will satisfy me if it will compare with these samples of art I see here in your office. As for the price of the work, I will leave that to your sense of honesty. Come tomorrow and we will talk it over between us, so now I will say good-day to you."

The kindly old man was already out the shop as Lanning was about to express his sincere thanks for the confidence his customer had placed in him. When the door had closed the young artist was left standing in

the middle of the room, with arms folded and gazing at the floor in deep thought.

Since the day he closed his father's eyes in death five years before, he had not met a single person until that moment in whom he could discover a trace of that feeling that anticipates friendship. "A strange old gentleman, indeed," thought Lanning. "How did he know that I would prove worthy of such generous confidence? There is something about the man that draws one to him, in fact, he seems more like an old friend than any one I have met in a long time."

In the midst of these thoughts the sole member of the firm of "Lanning & Co." sauntered out, hands in his pockets and sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and stood gazing at the big sign over his door, and the longer he looked, the more pretentious it became in his admiring eye. With that he walked into his shop, put on his coat, brushed a few more threads out of his faded cap, and locking the door, he declared the day a legal holiday.

Twirling his cane as though he had not a care in the world, he strolled along slowly toward the busier part of the city, and was lost in golden reveries until interrupted by a voice behind him. "See here, sir, your pesky stick came within an ace of putting my eye out of commission. Be more careful, my young man, how you juggle your cane."

Mumbling a request for pardon, Ned hastened his steps and turned up a side street leading to that important little edifice known as Saint John's Church. It was hidden away amid the tall overhanging buildings of modern industry.

Pausing on the opposite side of the street, the artist

gazed intently at it, studying its storm-stained front as though it were the grandest cathedral in the world. Every stone, every niche and arch had its attraction, now noted for the first time by their prejudiced admirer. How many a time before had he not passed that little pile and never even suspected its presence, while today its charms were innumerable. Never before had it drawn more than a passing glance in the great city, but today it could boast of at least one admirer.

After walking back and forth several times, developing a mental photograph, somewhat enlarged perhaps, of his castle of opportunity, Lanning hastened back to his forbidding-looking shop and locked the door in defiance of any more customers, feeding himself on the dreams of a future day.

The prospect of his first big job, permitted the extravagance of smoking a cigar, purchased at the sacrifice of his meager hoard, while the clouds of smoke rising to the ceiling served as the frame for the memory-pictures of former days. Poverty, disappointment and starvation were companions not easily forgotten. How well did his father's words recur to him as he sat there in the glow of his charcoal stove! "My son, the ladder of the artist has many a broken rung, and how often does the climber forget this fact as he strives to ascend to fame, only to find himself ever at the bottom. If I were sure you would remain steadfast in the faith of your father, I would die in peace; but I fear, my son, that I have made one grave mistake in my life."

The thought of God, suggested as it was by the scenes of his boyhood years, came into his mind for the first time since his father's death, but the prospect of his new

enterprise did not permit it to remain long. The little blackened tea-pot which had been simmering on the stove, announcing the preparation of his limited fare, suddenly called him from the land of golden fancy by boiling over, causing the dreamer to bestir himself to save the precious potion from evaporation. Thus are we called back to the reality of life by some insignificant little thing, reminding us that we must be up and doing while the battle rages.

Early on the following morning, in fact before Father Colton had finished saying Mass, the anxious Ned was at the church, ready for his tour of inspection. Noting that he was a little ahead of time, he knelt reverently at the door until the Mass was over, and the people leaving the church. As he was making his way down the aisle the priest recognized his young friend and nodded to him to follow, and in spite of his protests was ushered into breakfast, an invitation which was not at all unwelcome to a man of Lanning's purse.

"Mr. Lanning," began the priest when they were seated at the table, "I see you are out bright and early this morning, all ready for business. Two meals in the morning are not too much for a man who is obliged to navigate in these London fogs, and besides, I thought we could talk matters over more fully here. Now Mr.—by the way what is your first name, Mr. is a little too formal?"

"I usually go by the name, Ned, Father, but my parents at baptism gave me the names Edward John. I like the plain every-day Ned, because it always reminds me of my mother who used it as a favorite."

"You did not tell me yesterday that you were baptized. Was it in the Catholic Church?" asked the priest anxiously.

"Yes, Father, I was baptized by a good priest named Father Maloney, for whom I always retained the greatest love and respect."

"And yet, my boy, you admitted to me that you were not a Catholic when I was speaking to you yesterday."

"True, Father, and I must repeat the same today when I tell you that I have not been inside a church in the last ten years until this very morning. So you see that I was not very far wrong in what I told you. My good mother's influence over me was such that I felt I should never go wrong, and as for honesty and truthfulness, it was drilled into me from morning to night, and sometimes very emphatically. Mother never went to church and she never insisted on my going."

"Too bad, it is too bad," answered the priest, shaking his head thoughtfully. "Well," he continued with a sigh, "you are only one of the many children sent out into the world with their souls famished for a knowledge of God, and that, because the parents, no matter how good they might have been, did not possess the same faith. However, this may not impress you as it does me who for the last forty years have worked, with what humble success God alone knows, for the salvation of souls." As though he saw the futility of explaining his sentiments any further, Father Colton continued: "I am preventing you from eating your breakfast. We priests, living alone so much, are inclined to be somewhat loquacious at times. So let us eat first and talk after."

Once seated in the library, the priest began. "Now to come down to business. I have received a small legacy from an uncle of mine in Ireland lately, and after thinking over how best I could make use of it, I have come to the conclusion to spend it in the decoration of my little church. So long as I have enough to keep body and soul together, I am contented, and if I do not spend my small inheritance for the church I am afraid it will slip out of my hands in some other way. I am going to give you a free hand with the work, except that I would like to have two large canvas paintings over the two altars on the side—one painting of the 'Burial of Christ,' and the other of the 'Crucifixion.' The selection of the designs for the walls of the church I will leave entirely to you, and if the work proves satisfactory you shall be well paid."

"My best efforts, Father, shall not be too good for your kindness to me, and should the work prove to be unsatisfactory to you, my brush will not be put aside until it is made satisfactory, even though it were to require a whole year for its completion."

While Ned was talking, Father Colton was occupied in writing a check which he now handed to his young friend with the remark, "Here is a little money to secure your scaffolding, so begin whenever you are ready. Not a word now, but go right ahead and do your best."

"Thank you very much, Father," answered Lanning as he accepted the check for ten pounds, "but I would advise you to wait some time before you give me this money."

"No, no," interrupted the priest good naturedly, "I am the boss of my own inheritance, so good morning now and God bless you."

Although outwardly protesting, the poor artist was more than delighted to receive this enormous sum, and a more willing or zealous contractor never entered into an agreement with his employer than did Ned Lanning. Dame Fortune was not such an unfair lady after all, but how little did our young friend think that her generosity would surpass even his wildest expectations, but at what a cost! How many times does opportunity knock at our door to carry us along for a while on the breeze of disguised success, only to deposit us in the desert of a deeper and more dangerous despondency!

"The smile that fortune tenders,
Mayhap conceals a frown."

CHAPTER II.

AN HISTORICAL ECHO.

THE LITTLE old church to which we have given the name Saint John's, is one of the oldest landmarks of London today. There was a time when its glorious spire was the center of one of the most beautiful squares in the city, according it the more impressive title of cathedral. The good people pointed with a sense of pride to its huge columns and massive arches, but especially, to the splendor of its interior. In height it overtopped the loftiest point of vantage for miles around, but then, the great city of London was three centuries younger than at the time of Father Colton's pastorate.

Today the traveler would search many a day on his own account in looking for it, hidden away as it is in the arms of modern development. The huge business blocks which seem to scowl down at it as though it were an intruder, now hem it in on all sides, seizing in their insatiable greed every inch of space not occupied by the modest little edifice, while their wide jutting cornices deny it even its just share of sunlight.

The masters of modern industry are no respectors of persons or places, while the altar of mammon is ever ready to encroach upon the threshold of God's temple. History will scarcely be credited by future generations when it will tell them that an enlightened French gov-

ernment seized some of the Catholic churches to have them turned into coal yards and vaudeville houses, while the people were forced to worship their God in the streets. Alas, it is too true, and we have not told half the truth at that.

In the days of its infant splendor, when the burnished cross on the tower of Saint John's shone in the glow of the evening sunset as a sign of the God-given peace which hovered over the little homes at its base, a good and pious priest known as Father Christopher sat in the light of his candle reading an old manuscript copy of the Bible. His thoughts were not without distraction, however, as every now and then a look of anxiety and sometimes of sorrow came over his kindly old face.

Knowing that he derived no profit from his reading, he reverently closed the book, drew an old cloak over his stooping shoulders and went out into the darkness. He felt his way into the church where a solitary twinkling sentinel burned before the altar, as though beckoning him to approach the haven of his God. In the silence of the night the old man knelt in prayer, but even here his thoughts were disturbed by a feeling of uneasiness, excluding even an attempt at silent meditation. Finally, after many futile efforts to gather his distracted thoughts, he broke the stillness of the church by praying aloud.

"O God, the Father of all poor and unfortunate sinners, I am here before Thy tabernacle to ask a boon of Thee. My hair has grown gray in Thy service; these hands have been the unworthy instruments of Thy generosity among my fellow men. But how empty and fruitless had my labors been, didst Thou not sustain me. If there is aught, O God, that I have ever done to please

Thee, I beg that Thou wilt remember it for me tonight in return for the last one of the many favors I shall ask Thee to grant. I beseech Thee that the trials and dangers which I now foresee may find me in my last resting place. If, Master, it is Thy will that I should see the ruin of Thy church and the scattering of Thy flock, Thy will be done."

Having blessed himself devoutly, he gathered his faded cloak about him and walked slowly toward the door. Thus had the good old priest prayed many a night in the silence of the church, and yet as each day dawned he felt that his prayer would not be granted, as the rumbling storm was fast approaching.

The time of which we are speaking was the occasion of that great religious eruption, when the desire for political prestige was paramount to all sense of justice, and the love of power and wealth was eating the very heart out of the social body. From the throne of the adulterous King Henry down to the bench of the menial galley-slave the all-absorbing topic was the value of churches and monasteries.

The hero of the day was not the man who repelled the invader, not even the most notorious ale drinker of the town could gain a hearing with the man who could prove that he had helped in the sacking of a church or a monastery, and who, as proof, could exhibit a sacred vessel or vestment to the greedy gaze of the mob.

The once God-fearing Henry, "Defender of the Faith," now merited the title of "Robber of the Faith," so zealous and successful was he in plundering and destroying the defenceless walls of God's temple. This man who could not conceive a higher authority in the

world than his own, now sought to make the Catholics of his realm renounce all spiritual submission to their shepherd, and not succeeding, he dubbed himself pope in order to give free reign to his passions for lust and gold. Having satisfied the first craving until his person became most loathsome even to the members of his own household, he was now satisfying the second by devastating the churches and monasteries in search of treasure.

Had he lived a few centuries later, he would have become more than envious of his neighbor France, in her triumph over the same church. If there was a redeeming feature in Henry's method, it was in the manner in which he declared and carried out his intention to rob the church of God of its belongings. France has given her best citizens the very same dose, except that the French pill was sugar-coated with the so-called condemnation proceedings of modern legal invention. The man who takes your purse by force is a gentleman compared with the man who, with his oily tongue and plaintive voice, borrows it with the ultimate intention of never returning it.

Father Christopher no longer able to bear the anxiety of doubt, ventured out one afternoon in the direction of the market-place to verify, if possible, the rumors that had come to his ears. Knowing full well that his life was not worth very much should he be recognized, he carefully removed the garb of his ministry, and under this partial disguise he went out into the street.

As he was passing in front of the open windows of a tavern from which shouts of boisterous revelry issued, a rough hand was suddenly placed upon his arm, and a voice somewhat muddled from the effects of ale, addressed him.

"Whither in such haste, old man? I would a word with thee. I always halt the old scribes when I seek information, because they are sure to know as much as the watch himself."

Trembling with fear as he felt that he had been recognized, the priest turned to find a man who wore the livery of the king's household—a trooper a little the worse from ale. Drawing him to one side the soldier continued, "Now, old grandpa, I'm going to tell you a little secret, and if you value your head, it would be well to keep what I tell you to yourself. You old ones think more of your heads than us young bloods, so I'll let it go at that. I am around here looking for the bell-ringer of that church over yonder. If you can tell me his name and where I can find him, I will pay for all the ale you can drink. We would like to know just how fat that prize is over there, and the ringer is my man."

"Sir," answered the priest scarcely able to speak from what he had just heard, "I do remember that he is called 'Belfry John,' but I do not know where he keeps himself. That is about all that I am able to tell you."

"I'm sorry, old man, you can't tell me more. Come in and we'll have a drink anyway on good King Henry. You may become more talkative after you have a tankard or two." The trooper then seized the arm of his companion and was about to lead him into the tavern, when a man, whom the priest recognized as one of his flock, and who recognized him in turn, suddenly came up and said in assumed command, "See here, you go and carry that message I gave you. I, your master, will do the drinking for both of us." At the same time he gave the priest no gentle push out the tavern door.

Father Christopher understood the scheme too well to hesitate, and with a look of gratitude at his deliverer, he hurried off, leaving the two men to their drinking. Urged on by the terrible secret he had been fortunate enough to hear, it did not take the old priest very long to reach home.

As he came before the door of the church, he paused, and with the tears rolling down his furrowed cheeks, said half aloud, "It has come at last. The house of God is about to see its ruin, while I who have seen it go up stone by stone, must now be witness to its fall as a prey to the Godless despoiler—it is too much God is asking of me."

The darkness of the night had scarcely settled over the city, when Father Christopher hastened to the church where he locked himself within and fell upon his knees before the altar. Far into the night he knelt there, communing with his God, while tears of sorrow coursed down his aged face as he thought of the many times those four walls had sheltered the flock to which he would now become an outcast.

Long did he gaze on those peaceful surroundings to which he must soon become a stranger. The thought of his helplessness to prevent this outrage on his church made his blood boil as it did in his youth, when he could return blow for blow even with the best of them. A word from his lips, and his people would rise in one body to defend the house of God, and those miserable thieves of the king would have the battle of their lives. This rebellious thought gave way only before the remembrance of his own faithless service under his forgiving Master. What right had he to judge his fellow men?

Rousing himself from his bitter reverie, the old priest seemed to become suddenly imbued with the activity of youth, for he proceeded with all haste to remove the sacred vessels and valuable articles from the sight of the plunderers. "Those sacred receptacles of the Body and Blood of Christ shall never be polluted in the hands of the regal thieves," thought he as he went about his work.

Everything used in the immediate service of the altar was soon hidden away in a place known to himself alone. Just when he felt that everything of value was put away, his eye suddenly rested upon a large painting of the "Crucifixion," and a feeling of sorrow arose within him at the thought of leaving it exposed to the greed of the ravagers. A tender affection existed in the old man's heart for that painting, and that one glance was enough to induce him to place it with the other treasures. It was not, however, without much difficulty that he removed the large canvas from its lofty position, and as tenderly as a mother handles her child, he rolled it up and placed it away.

The sun was beginning to rise above the distant horizon when Father Christopher completed his task. Lastly he went about locking all the doors, putting up all the barriers he could find in order to protect the entrances, while he muttered to himself, "They shall not walk into God's house without hindrance."

Everything was finally arranged to his satisfaction and, with one last look at his Master's house while a great sigh came from his sorrowful heart, he walked out into the road where he was to find his new home. There in the coming dawn he waited in thought for a while with his head low on his breast, murmuring a last prayer, until

he turned with one longing look and tore himself away from all that he held dear in this life. No one saw him ever after and knew him as Father Christopher. His prayer had been answered; he had been forewarned of the time of destruction and he could not bear to be a witness to it.

The evening of the day of the departure of the exile, a huge mob was gathered in the market square. A crippled beggar, who, on many occasions, had partaken of the priest's charity, now occupied a broken cart, while he addressed the motley crowd of thieves around him, swinging his well-worn crutch as he would a club to emphasize his remarks.

"Knaves and members of the brotherhood, I want you to listen to me with your ears open. I want all of your attention and none of your talk while I am speaking. The dog that barks must be cudgelled. I'll crack the pate of the knave who interrupts me. You all know what we are here for, and I see that some of you are ready for business. We are going to be good citizens for once, and we are here to do a little job for the king. We have managed to get a little news of Hal's making and we ain't going to let any wizened slave of the court come over here to show us old-time lifters how to get the gold, are we?" With a thunderous "No," for an answer, he continued, "If there is any blood to let, we are going to let it. Now, men, I want every villain among you to be here at the second watch tonight, and we'll show the king and his knaves how we'uns can fix the job. If there is to be any gold we are to have it, for poor devils like us need a tankard more than Henry's sleek hangmen; and if you want a leech to give you the secret

of health I'll tell you this, don't be caught. We'd all be meat for the crows on Henry's tower tomorrow if we are taken. So now to your dens and don't forget the hour tonight. Are you all with me for the plucking?"

The response which came from the mob convinced the speaker that his oratorical powers were not diminishing. "To your holes till then," said he finally, as he hobbled away on his crutch. The crowd disappeared as swiftly as it came, while a half exultant murmur rose into the air, leaving the square silent and deserted.

The solitary watch was suddenly brought to a standstill as he was making his rounds that night, when he beheld a weird procession heading down the road toward the church. The light of innumerable torches cast a sickening glare on the sea of fiendish faces, as they came on with the noise of an army, cursing and quarreling as they anticipated the division of the spoils. Some were singing ribald songs of tavern composition, while all shouted derision against God and king.

Scarcely had it come in sight of the church when a frenzy seized the throng, and with a defiant roar they rushed pell mell toward the entrance of the defenceless church. The cripple who had assumed the leadership, was the first on the landing, with the howling mob not far behind. What was their surprise when they saw three of the king's guardsmen with drawn swords step out of the shadow of the wall!

One of the trio had hardly announced the king's decree, when the cripple, with his crutch high over his head, shouted, "At them, men." A powerful stroke from one of the trooper's swords stretched the beggar on the ground with his head split open. The sight of their

leader slain, frenzied the mob beyond all control, and, throwing themselves upon the unfortunate soldiers, literally tore them to pieces. The door of the church was soon swaying under the telling blows of an improvised battering-ram, while with every thud the walls seemed to tremble on their foundations. It was a few moments only before the sacred edifice was open to the sack of the mob.

The rage of the crowd was only increased when it was discovered that all the treasure had been removed. They glutted their anger by destroying everything within their reach, using huge stones as the instruments of destruction, while they cursed the soldiers who had, as they thought, forestalled them in taking the plunder.

For nearly an hour the work of devastation went on as though the fiends of hell had been loosed, while the shouting and cursing re-echoed from the vaulted roof which had never known aught but the praise of the Almighty. In the midst of the bedlam, the cry, "The guards!" rang through the din, and like magic every hand dropped its instrument of destruction and, in a few moments, one would think that the floor had opened up and swallowed the howling mass.

It was a fortunate thing, indeed, that there was something to instill fear into the cowardly mob, as they were about the apply the torch to a great pile of broken furniture which had been gathered in the center of the floor, and in their haste to escape the guards, who were nowhere to be seen, they left their work of destruction unfinished. They disappeared like rats into every hole that would receive them, leaving the house of God a sad and desolate scene.

The following morning the troopers of the king appeared on their glorious mission of plunder, only to find their comrades murdered in cold blood inside the door of the church. The bodies were crushed beyond all recognition beneath the feet of the rabble, and lay as the silent witnesses of the havoc wrought in the name of England's good King Henry. Seeing that the mob had done its work only too well, the soldiers left the premises, cursing the thieves who had deprived them of their loot.

No word of inquiry as to the authors of the attack on the church was ever heard after, although the beggars boasted in broad day of their valorous deeds; nor could they be blamed when they were but following in the footsteps of their royal master; and indeed, the crime of the rabble could well be overlooked in the light of some of Henry's foul deeds. The stone shell of the church stood in its denuded state for years, a silent witness to the "glorious" reign of the king while he lived, giving the lie to his paid historians who never tired of recording the valorous deeds of "Our Good King Henry."

How many years that little edifice stood deserted and unnoticed, was never recorded, as the terrible times which followed left many another church and monastery in the same condition, to be the home of the visitors of the night—the bats and the owls. It was for the next century to see Saint John's once more occupied by its rightful owners, until it gradually resumed the appearance of a house of God, where His divine praise again resounded within its walls.

For years it continued to be the home of a numerous flock until it was once more seized by the crown which it so ably helped to sustain, to be given over to the Church

of England. For about twenty years it harbored the silk-gowned aristocracy of the city, while the poor were conspicuous only by their absence. The wealthy landlords of the city sent their wives and daughters to hear the preacher on Sunday, while they spent the morning in the club house or tavern.

The congregation, as it was called, was at first large enough to fill over half the church, but as time went on and the novelty of the new surroundings wore off, it was found advisable to hold services in one of the vestry rooms, so few people attended. Such is the case in many of the churches of Ireland as well as England, which were seized by the crown, thus leaving the Catholic poor to find other places of worship. What makes the situation even more heart-rending is the bold effrontery of stereotyped historians in lauding the architecture of Protestant institutions which have been reared by the blood and brawn of the children of the Catholic church.

Failing in their effort to reconcile sloth and salvation, the ministers of the crown, unable to drum up a congregation to occupy the church, soon deserted the property of Saint John's, so that it once more came into possession of its rightful owners, with whom it remained, until we find it today under the guidance of Father Colton.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRICE OF FRIENDSHIP.

THE EXPENDITURE of his legacy, about two thousand dollars, was the source of much interest to Father Colton, devoting not a little of his time in watching the progress of the work which was fairly under way. Even the novelty of climbing up into the scaffolding beside the artist afforded a pleasant diversion for the priest, although his advanced age interfered somewhat with his climbing ability. Every spare moment found him in the church, quietly chatting with his young friend in the midst of his work, until the two became intimately acquainted.

This intimacy was extremely pleasant to Ned Lanning, whose previous life had not been noted for the acquisition of confiding friends, but in the course of their conversations he found one little objection, and that was Father Colton's tendency to introduce the subject of religion. An uncomfortable feeling arose in Lanning's heart whenever the subject was broached, not so much from a prejudiced dislike for religion, but because of the sad memories of days gone by when his good parents, not aware of the attention of their child, indulged in many an argument on the question. As a result of these disputes the boy always noticed that his father ate very little at meal time, while his mother went about her work in silence, denying herself the little song she used to hum whenever she was happy.

These impressions of the child-mind fostered a feeling of aversion for religion which remained in later manhood, and it was for this reason that a slight obstacle prevented a fuller confidence between Father Colton and himself.

Ned's father was not an irascible man; in fact, he was exceedingly mild-mannered in spite of his poor health. Robert Lanning knew that he had made one grave mistake in his career when he had married a girl whose religion differed from his own, but the knowledge of his error did not come to him until it was too late for a remedy. What made his sorrow even more unbearable was due to the fact that his big heart was bursting with love for the woman he had made his wife. Time failed to dampen the ardor of his affection, but in spite of their ideal union, the question of religion seemed to loom up continually on the horizon of their greater happiness.

The sorrow of the father was not lightened when the first born came into the world, knowing full well that his responsibility as a father became greater owing to his promise to the church that he would bring up the child as a Catholic. A great sigh of relief came from his heart when he beheld the completion of the ceremony of baptism, for he felt as though some invisible force were waiting to snatch the little one's soul from its God.

A few years later the task of inculcating the lessons of religion in his child's mind fell upon the paternal shoulders, and this duty, together with his struggle in the support of the family, soon brought the first grey hairs of worry. The father's continued absence from home allowed sufficient time for the young boy to acquire a spirit of indifference towards the efforts of the parent,

which were seemingly lost in the loving indulgence of the mother. If a knowledge of the catechism were the only requisite, Lanning would have been successful in rearing his child as a Catholic, but there was something more than book-learning necessary, and that was a daily feeding of the little soul on the details of religious child-life, and for this, the coöperation of the mother was most essential.

In spite of the father's every effort, the child never evinced more than an obedient desire to practice his religion, simply because the mother could not give to her offspring that which she did not possess herself. Such is the history of many a marriage between well-meaning people of different religious convictions. If the effects of such unions were confined only to the parents it would not be so deplorable, but the mark of indifference is nearly always stamped upon the children to such an extent that today we find a class which can be called neither atheist nor Christian. The impressions of childhood are almost indelible, and for Ned Lanning the question of religion served only to recall moments he would rather forget.

Under the deft brush of our young friend, the stencil-work on the side walls of the church was rapidly nearing completion, but there remained still the most important part of his undertaking in the painting of the two canvases over the altars. One morning, about the end of the following week, Ned came rushing into the priest's room with a smile that betrayed an awaiting surprise, and said:

"Father, I would like to have you come out and see what I have in store for you. I want you to be candid

with me when you see it and tell me just what you think."

"All right, my boy; I'll be with you in one minute, when I can find an old coat to replace this cassock. It is something worth seeing, I'll wager."

"I will wait for you at the foot of the stairs, Father," said Lanning, as he closed the door behind him. He was not obliged to wait very long, however, as Father Colton was almost at his heels. They both hurried out to the church, where Ned aided the priest to ascend into the scaffolding near the ceiling, until they stood in front of a large tarpaulin which hung before them.

"Now, Father," said the artist, whose face denoted a sense of extreme pleasure, "I have kept this as a surprise for you, and we are going to have the formality of an unveiling." With that he pulled the necessary cord and the large covering fell at the feet of the priest with a swish, revealing to his astonished gaze a mammoth painting of "The Burial of Christ." For a moment Father Colton was speechless, and without a word he grasped the grimy hand of his young friend and, pressing it warmly, said:

"Your fortune is made, my boy, or I'm no judge of art. When did you do that magnificent work—surely not since I engaged you? Why, it is the work of a lifetime."

"One of my bad habits," answered Lanning, "first led me to your acquaintance, Father, and that was the habit of sitting up nights to the ruin of my landlady's purse, which went mostly for gas bills. I still have the nocturnal habit, and this little effort is the result. I feel amply repaid for my late hours, however, as I see that you are well pleased."

"Pleased, did you say? Why, I am the proudest priest in London, to be the possessor of such a beautiful treasure."

The painting was indeed a remarkable creation of light and color, blending harmoniously in depicting the consignment of the lifeless body of Christ to the grave. The figure of the Saviour was remarkably noticeable, possessing the marble-like shades of a dead body, while the features still retained that same pleading look which the words "Father, forgive them" must suggest to the Christian mind.

After standing before the painting for some time, and commenting on its newly revealed beauties, Father Colton finally said, "Mr. Lanning, when the world at large knows your real worth, you will not be doing such work for a poor little church like mine. You will be up amongst the notables before long, and of that I have not the least doubt. There is one thing I would have you keep in mind, my boy, and that is, that when the world is dealing out its honied flattery and people are anxious to have your name on their visiting cards, a man is liable to lose his head. Remember that there is still something more valuable than fame to work for and that is your immortal soul. The man who can express in color such religion as you have expressed in this picture must needs have the very germ of religion in his heart, even though he were a pagan in practice. I hope that God will some day lend you a little of His sunshine to bring those seeds into blossom. My young friend, remember what I now tell you, that from the moment you finish the little contract I have given you and our roads diverge, you can depend upon me to help you return to your God."

The moisture of gratitude showed in the young man's eyes as he said: "Father, how could I ever forget your kind words! Some day I may have sense enough to take advantage of your offer, but I shall never forget your kindness as long as I live."

"Now," continued the priest, "I do not want you to sit up at night over the next painting. Take your time and do not ruin your health by losing your rest. I am sure if the next painting approaches this one in beauty, it will be as much of a surprise to me."

"It will be better, Father, if I can possibly make it so," answered Lanning.

"I am not afraid of that, Ned, and I will not even be curious until it is entirely finished. Go slowly now, and for your own sake do not work too hard." As he finished speaking, Father Colton made his way down the ladder and returned to the house, hoping in his heart that the young artist would one day return to the practice of his religion.

Lanning seeing that he could do nothing further at the church that day, collected his scattered belongings and started for home, satisfied with himself on having pleased his friend. Immediately on reaching his modest little workshop, he donned a new suit which Father Colton's legacy had enabled him to purchase, and, taking his inseparable cane, he sauntered out for a stroll.

It was a strange sense of honest independence which now took possession of him as he walked along the busy streets that afternoon, while the spirit of worldly contentment was visible in his manly face. The lights in the store windows were just beginning to sparkle through the heavy fog which hung over the city all day, but for a

man who had just been given a new lease on life, the gloom of the weather had no influence. The sight of some poor beggar with his load of gathered wood on his shoulder, touched the heart of the stroller as he moved along, arousing in him a greater appreciation of his own happiness and contentment.

An almost tangible mantle of darkness was now settling over the city, through which filtered the feeble rays of the artificial lamps on the street corners, making them appear like solitary candles in the mist. As he was crossing the bridge over the Thames, he paused to inhale the cool breeze which came up from the water, striving to catch a glimpse of the black pool which swirled beneath him in the darkness.

As he leaned over the railing of the bridge, his heart suddenly stopped in his breast as a sound like the fall of a huge wall came upon his ears, and in the excitement of the moment, Lanning dropped his cane into the river. Everything was as still as death for a second, even the buzz of the great city ceased, as though in surprise at the unusual disturbance, while Ned stood listening intently for some sound that might reveal the location of the hidden catastrophe.

The inky blackness was immediately lighted up with one of those unearthly scenes which become more ghastly in the night, while the deadly calm was rent by the most ear-piercing screams that the agony of terrible death alone can produce. The scene which lighted up the river before Lanning's eyes was the yellowish glare of a burning steamer in mid-stream, resulting from the awful crash of two vessels as they collided in the fog. There,

not a quarter of a mile from where he stood, he saw the terrible tragedy which made the blood freeze in his veins.

In the livid glare of the roaring flames he could see that the steamer was crowded with passengers, who were running about like wild beasts, frantic with fear. Rushing down the dock which bordered the river in the rear of the large shipping houses, he stumbled along in the dim light of the burning wreck, searching as he went for means of rescue. With a "Thank God" on his lips, he at length came across an old flat-bottomed fishing boat, with two ungainly oars lying on the floor of it.

Throwing himself headlong into the boat, he seized the heavy oars and began to push out from the dock. Alas, in his hurry he was horrified to find that the boat was locked fast to the landing. With his teeth clenched, he lifted one of the heavy oars by the blade, and swinging the handle of it over his head, he smashed the lock into a hundred fragments. He seemed to have been imbued with the strength of a giant as he forced the clumsy boat out into the stream.

As he neared the terrible sight, the heat became almost unbearable, forcing him to make his way around on the windward side, while he permitted his boat to drift with the running tide as it approached the crackling furnace. The flames had driven the people to the forward deck, where they huddled together like so many sheep. The look of agony on their faces was awful to behold, as they stood watching the life boats licked up in the flames, cutting off all means of escape. The vessels were rammed together in such a way that they burned as one, and being of the old river type they did not last long in the burning.

The doomed victims were soon driven from the deck, and with a cry of despair, they dropped one by one, into the less merciful black waters of the Thames. There, within a few rods of the shore, the unfortunate people perished in the night. Everything happened so quickly that it seemed eternity before those on shore were of any assistance to the poor victims.

Out of the gloom on the edge of the fire light, came a solitary boat, manned by our young friend, who struggled painfully at the heavy oars until it seemed to him that he would be too late to offer any help to the few survivors who were yet on deck. Dipping his coat and hat in the water to protect himself against the scorching heat of the burning wreck, Lanning was about to force his boat alongside the vessel, when his oars and the sides of his boat were seized in the death-grip of those who were struggling in the water, and it seemed that at any moment he would be upset in the frenzied battle.

Words were of no avail to calm the fears of the despairing wretches in such a terrible crisis, and Lanning set to work to free his oars from the grasp of the drowning victims. After a powerful effort, and with many tuggings at his heart for his seeming cruelty, he at last succeeded in freeing the oars, to drop them into the bottom of the boat for later use. Ned now turned his entire attention to the women and children, and succeeded in pulling several into the boat in spite of the unsteadiness of his craft. As he was reaching for another victim his attention was attracted by the efforts of an able-bodied man who was striving to climb over the side of the boat, to the danger of the other occupants. His

weight pulled the edge of the boat even with the waves at every lurch, so that it was already beginning to ship water.

Lanning saw the danger of the situation, and while he was lifting a fourth victim into the boat, he shouted at the man to go around to the end and climb over. The fellow, who was well able to do as he was told, still continued to rock the boat in his efforts, until Lanning seized a boat-hook near at hand and, lifting it menacingly, ordered him to loose his hold. This movement of Ned's brought the fellow to his senses, for he immediately dropped back into the water and began to swim for shore with apparent ease.

By this time the running tide had carried the little fishing boat down stream with its wretched occupants, until they were some distance from the burning wreck. In the hope of picking up some other unfortunate, the rescuer seized the oars and turned the nose of the craft once more in the direction of the burning vessel. As he came into the light of the wreck, one of the rescued women who had lain unconscious in the boat, suddenly rose to her feet, shouting, "Where is my child? Oh, save my boy for the love of God!"

The bitter anguish of that cry remained in Lanning's memory for many a day. Without any warning the poor mother seemed to lose all reason, while her face became fiendish in the sickening glare of the raging fire. As quick as thought, she seized the hook which lay at her feet, and in a murderous frenzy fell upon the other occupants of the boat, which in the struggle was upset, throwing the rescued once more into the water. Lanning now gave up all hope of saving anyone but himself,

knowing that there was a strenuous effort ahead of him.

As a swimmer he was not an expert, and soon found that the swift current was carrying him out from the shore lights, forcing him to the utmost to keep his head above water. After several attempts to escape the force of the current, he finally succeeded in reaching the still water. As he did so, his hand accidentally came in contact with an object floating alongside him, while a reflected ray of light on the water showed him that the upturned face was that of a woman.

Seizing the seemingly lifeless body with one arm, he struggled towards shore with the other, while his heart began to beat in his breast like a trip-hammer from his supreme effort. The shore might be a mile away, or it might be near at hand for all that Lanning knew, but he was fully determined to fight to the last. Every second brought him to the verge of despair, but he muttered a little prayer that he remembered since childhood, and struggled on with the burden which was growing heavier at every stroke.

His hand at length came in touch with the edge of an old scow and, eagerly seizing it, he hung there, panting from sheer exhaustion. After he had recovered his breath sufficiently, he lifted the body of the woman from the water and painfully drew his own tired limbs up on the precious landing, where for a moment he fell in utter helplessness. As he lay there facing the scene of the wreck in the distance, he saw that they had been carried nearly a mile down the river.

After a brief rest, he rose slowly to his feet and his eye rested on the body beside him. In the feeble light of the distant fire he bent down to examine the face, and

felt that he had rescued a lifeless corpse. In spite of his suspicion, he set to work immediately to infuse a little warmth into the benumbed body, and in this he was successful, for in a few moments the woman opened her eyes and began to breathe more freely.

Looking on the face of the woman he had saved from a watery grave, Lanning saw that she was a refined, middle-aged person whose hair was prematurely gray. As she returned to the full consciousness of her position she muttered feebly, "May God bless you, sir, for saving me from such a horrible death."

"My dear lady, there is no time for thanks now," answered Ned. "I must bring you to some place where you can dry and warm yourself. Do not worry while I run to secure a cab to take you away from this terrible scene." With that he hastened up a narrow street which led back from the river, and after about ten minutes' wait, was fortunate enough to hail a passing cab.

The driver unwillingly pulled up his horse while a passenger within reached his head out of the window and savagely inquired the cause of the delay, mumbling something about catching a train. It was several minutes before Lanning could convince them of the gravity of the situation, and then only after he had called their attention to his water-soaked clothing. The driver and his passenger followed closely in the footsteps of our young hero to where the rescued woman lay shivering in the cold.

Between them the two strangers lifted the helpless victim tenderly and bore her to the cab, while Ned followed close behind. As they moved away from the scene of the tragedy, he stopped to pick up a small

article which had fallen at his feet, belonging evidently to the unconscious woman. Intending to return it when he saw her in a place of safety, he carefully placed it in his pocket.

The feeble lamp of the waiting cab reflected its light on the features of the senseless woman, revealing to the eyes of the hasty gentleman the face of one who was not unknown to him. With an exclamation of surprised horror, he recognized the body of his aunt, saying, in broken words, "What, Lady Arlington in this terrible condition? My God, how could this happen?" Turning to the driver, with a tone of ill-concealed severity he commanded, "Cabby, see that you make Chatham Square within ten minutes; it may mean life or death for her."

The cab door closed with a slam almost in Ned's face, leaving him standing on the curbing in his dripping clothing, surprised and not a little hurt at the abrupt manner of the stranger's departure. The spasm of a chill passing over him soon reminded him that there was no time for humoring his injured feelings, so he turned his weary feet in the direction of home.

He never remembered how he reached his little shop that night, as it required only a few moments for him to remove his ruined clothing to be lost in the realm of unconscious rest.

The warm sunlight was flooding his room the next morning when he awoke, informing him that the world outside was long astir in the business of life. The day was cheerful in the extreme as though in irony of the dreary tragedy of the previous night. Lanning felt little the worse from his adventure, and he was in no hurry to interrupt the drowsy recollections of a terrible night.

Prompted by the craving of a ravenous appetite, he at length arose from his reverie and, donning his working clothes started for the favorite lunch-counter around the corner, where he surprised the old proprietor with the generosity of his order. A passing newsboy found a ready customer in the young artist as he was making his way back to his shop, so anxious was he to read the account of the disaster in which he had played a conspicuous part.

From the report in "The Times," it seems that the passenger steamer "Albatross," which plies between London and Margate, taking in the smaller towns on the way, was delayed in the thick fog, the density of which concealed her lights from a sea-going freighter, the two vessels crashing in the darkness.

The accident would not have been so horrible were it not for the sudden burst of flame from the hold, where, unknown to the steamer inspectors, a cargo of gasoline had been stored. The nose of the freighter had forced its way into the hold containing the gasoline, and it is surmised that the impact opened one or several of the casks, to burst suddenly into a roaring furnace, exacting the lives of thirty or more victims.

The two vessels burned to the water's edge in the sight of shore, while the intensity of the heat prevented any attempt at rescuing the unfortunates, who, dazed at the sight of the horrible death awaiting them, dropped into their burning coffin like moths in a flame. Within an hour, naught remained of the two vessels save the charred hulks, which served only to mark the grave of many loved ones who had left their homes for the last time.

Thus is it some slight violation of a seemingly insignificant rule that comes into horrible prominence at a most unexpected moment. It is always at the cost of many lives that the authorities can be aroused from their official lethargy to guard the people who pay taxes to keep them in office. The exact number of victims was not known for many days, as the passenger list was not kept aboard these inland boats, but there is no doubt that the inefficiency and smallness of the crew, together with the absence of discipline, went far to account for the unnecessary sacrifice of human lives.

To Ned Lanning's mind, there were no words that could picture the dire calamity; no tongue could imitate the sickening cries of the despairing creatures who were lost in the flames. With an ever-increasing feeling of horror at the recollection of that which he would rather forget, he was about to cast the paper aside, when another item at the bottom of the page caught his eye. "Lady Arlington Rescued," was the heading noted. Beneath was a glowing account of the manner of her rescue by the unknown man, to whom was addressed a personal letter from the lady herself.

"Through the courtesy of 'The Times,' Lady Arlington desires to express her sincere gratitude to the unknown young gentleman who so gallantly saved her from death. Should he find it convenient to call, he would confer a great favor upon the undersigned by permitting her to thank him in person for his brave deed. The name of the young hero, should he condescend to reveal it, will always be treasured in the heart and home of

His sincere friend,

LADY ARLINGTON,
Chatham Square."

The note was eagerly devoured by the young artist, whose heart was overjoyed on learning the identity of his new friend. A strange feeling of satisfaction took possession of him as he sat there with the paper in his grasp, arising from the fact that his identity was still concealed from those who would desire very much to learn it. Years of struggle as an artist were useless in their results towards attracting the attention of the world, and now the whole city of London was curious to know Ned Lanning.

In the midst of his musing he suddenly remembered the article he had picked up on the dock the night of the accident, and immediately he began to search for it. After a little trouble he at length came across it in an inner pocket of the suit he had ruined in his heroic work, and saw that it was a small card-case containing a number of visiting cards on one of which he found the name of the lady in question. Extracting the card, which was somewhat the worse from the action of the water, Ned put it carefully away among his private possessions and in its place he inserted a short note in the following words:

"DEAR LADY ARLINGTON:

"Your letter in the 'Times' noted. I trust you will pardon my apparent indifference to your generous offer for that which I deemed but a sacred duty. I claim no other reward but the assurance of your friendship, as my friends are few. I send you this relic of a memorable night, hoping for your complete recovery from the terrible shock you suffered. Gratefully yours,

"EDWARD J. LANNING."

It was not a matter of forgetfulness that caused him to give no address by which he could be found, for through some reason of his own, he desired to conceal his identity, taking the precaution to mail his parcel in a distant part of the city in order that the postmark might not betray the locality of his home. Why he acted in this strange manner he could not tell, except to postpone for a while, as many do, the enjoyment of a pleasure that they are sure awaits their tasting.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOMENT OF INDECISION.

THERE WAS ONE THING which seemed to be the source of more or less worry to young Lanning, and that was the want of a copy from which to secure the second painting for the church. A diligent search through the galleries of the city offered nothing that would satisfy him as a model of the "Crucifixion," knowing full well that the works in the public institutions were simply overcopied by the army of aspiring artists. Originality in design and coloring was Lanning's one hobby, and until he could satisfy this peculiarity of taste, there was no progress made in decorating the church.

More for the sake of diversion than from the hope of finding much to do, Ned walked over to the church just as the factory whistles were announcing the hour of closing. With the light of his lantern he climbed into the scaffolding, intending to take the measurement of the wall to be covered by the second canvas. This being accomplished, he seized his chisel and began to remove the projecting grill work of the plaster which would interfere with the even hanging of the huge canvas.

It was no easy task that he attempted—the removal of this old plaster which was as hard as stone, and which had been on the wall most likely for the greater part of a century. For half an hour or more he worked dili-

gently in the flickering light of his lantern, disturbing the silence of the church whenever a stray piece of plaster missed the suspended tarpaulin and crashed to the floor beneath, giving rise to an echo that increased almost to a roar in the deserted building.

As he was reaching high above his head in an effort to dislodge a stubborn projection, his feet slipped from under him and in a moment would have lost his balance had not his knee become suddenly imbedded in a spot in the wall which gave way under the pressure. With a thunderous roar a huge slab went hurling down into the darkened church, reverberating for several seconds. There is no need to say that Lanning was somewhat frightened at his narrow escape, but his fright was soon changed to amazement when, right before him, he saw a square opening, a perfect doorway in the wall, concealed beneath a temporary slab of plaster.

Amazement turned to curiosity when he discovered an inner framework on hinges, which opened easily to his hand. Holding his lantern into the opening as far as his arm could reach, he saw nothing but the reflection of his light on a wall within which led down into the darkness. On working his body a little further into the opening he discovered a crude ladder leaning against the other side of the wall on which he was working.

How many a time had he read in story books of hidden caves and secret passages, to pass them over with a feeling of indifferent credulity, but to find himself in the presence of one of these mysterious realities was enough to chill the blood in his veins. With the greatest caution he forced his body into the opening until his feet rested on the top rung of the ladder, but he no sooner did so

than he returned immediately to his outer platform. It might take a brave man to fight the elements of fire and water, but it requires no ordinary hero to trust himself without a quiver, to an unexplored darkness.

The spirit of adventure took possession of the artist, however, and in a few moments he determined on a safer course. Securing one of his longest ropes, he fastened the lantern to the end of it and lowered it into the inner darkness until he had expended about thirty feet of the line, and with the aid of his light he peered into the depth to assure himself that the ladder was safe enough for his descent. Satisfied with the solidity of the massive ladder, he cautiously made his way down until he felt his foot touching a firm landing.

The chamber or room in which he found himself was almost square, bordered by four stone walls of massive masonry of an age gone by, but it was entirely empty, save for the lifelike shadows which danced about him in the light of his lantern. An accumulation of about two inches of dust on the floor showed the intruder that his were the first footprints in that carpet of time, while he stood in wonderment and silent thought, striving to divine the purpose of the builders in making such a vault.

With his foot he thoughtlessly scraped off some of the sediment on the stone floor, and as he did so, the thought came to him that there might be another opening somewhere, either in the walls or in the floor. Ascending the ladder once more, he secured a hammer, and on his return began his investigation, listening for some hollow sound as he tapped the walls around him. Turning his attention to the floor, his effort was finally rewarded when

he came upon one of the flags which seemed to be loose. Clearing away the dust from it, he beheld a small iron ring.

With beating pulse he gingerly lifted the stone from its place, revealing a subterranean cavity at his feet, down into which a second ladder led the way. Lowering his lantern as before, Ned saw that the depth was not very great and he proceeded to make his way down the ladder; but his descent was a little more hasty than he bargained for, when a rung of the ladder gave way under his weight, precipitating him to the floor in the darkness, his lantern having gone out in the fall.

He was in no way tardy in making use of a few matches he was fortunate enough to possess, not knowing what danger lurked in the black hole. With a sigh of relief he beheld the little wick come into life once more, and by the aid of its dim light he saw that he stood in a small chamber just high enough for him to stand erect.

If Lanning's pulse beat faster he did not show it, but there was no doubt that he felt far from comfortable in his strange haunts beneath the outer world. In order to prevent his imagination from getting the better of him, he began to feel his way along the walls, but he had not gone very far when his foot came into contact with some heavy object on the floor. Placing his precious light at his feet, he discovered that the object was an old iron-bound casket, beside which lay a covered roll.

With his heart beating like a hammer in his breast, and his fingers twitching nervously, he began to investigate the nature of his find. The casket he could not open, try as he might, but from the weight of it he felt that it contained something valuable. Turning his attention to

the mysterious roll, he cautiously removed the covering enough for him to see that he held in his hand a beautiful painting of the "Crucifixion," nothing less than a work of the great master of the middle ages, Michael Angelo.

The discovery almost took the breath out of his body as he stood there, knowing full well the value of the canvas. Like the starving prospector at the sight of the long-sought gold, Lanning trembled with strange emotion at the sight of this artistic jewel, studying its beauty with the eye of a man who knew its worth. After gazing at the painting for some time, he carefully rolled it in its covering once more, and finding nothing else in the vault he made as if to return the way he came, intending to inform Father Colton, when suddenly he paused in the center of the room as a thought came into his agitated mind.

As he stood there in that silent chamber, with his little lantern swinging on his arm, his face assumed a determination not often seen there, while his fingers moved convulsively as he brushed back the hair from his furrowed brow and his white teeth came together with a loud snap. The sight of the artist's features at that moment revealed the lesser man which is in all of us, but under more or less control, and it was clearly evident that Ned Lanning, as he stood there, hidden from the eye of man, was fast losing control of his better self. As though his silence taunted him into hesitation, he suddenly muttered in a decisive undertone, "Bah, what a fool; what a sickly coward I am! Who will ever know that there was a painting here? Why, it will be the making of my fortune, and here I stand within reach of it, asking myself whether it would be right or wrong. What is

religion to me, who never gave it a second thought? It is all this foolish prattle about right and wrong that has kept me where I am all these years."

In that moment of indecision the thought of his mother was the only thing which made him hesitate, but the vision of a life of ease and comfort came before him in too strong a contrast to his former life of drudgery. The temptation was too great for his barren soul, and the maxim of honesty was wiped from the coat of arms of the house of Lanning.

As though to remove all doubt from his wavering mind, a new idea suddenly occurred to him. "I have it! Here I have been looking all over the city of London for a model of the 'Crucifixion' and it looms up just where no one ever dreamed of its existence. What's to prevent me from doing a copy of this and leaving it with the church? In a way the painting will not be known from the original, and remain in the possession of the church."

The thought came as a balm, extracting all the malice from his intended action, leaving his conscience dormant under the pleasant influence of this newly discovered opiate. The plan seemed to give him new courage, for he immediately put the coveted object under his arm and cautiously made his way up into the body of the church, listening for every sound which might suggest the presence of another, while in every shadow outlined by his lantern on the surroundings, he seemed to make out the figure of Father Colton. As he was hurrying down the aisle of the church with his precious burden under his arm, his heart gave one bound as a report like a pistol-shot rang out, but his better reason told him that it was

the slam of the church door. Before opening the door leading out into the street, he placed the roll in an obscure corner and after extinguishing his light, gazed out into the night for signs of passersby, but there was no one stirring. The look which his face bore as he cautiously peered out into the darkness was that of a hunted criminal, and as to his feelings, they were already dead; he had gone too far.

Finding that the coast was clear, he once more seized his prize and dropped it on the ground in the shadow of the railing, while he went back into the church to find his hat, which he had almost forgotten in his excitement. Lighting his lantern once more, he remembered that he left the hat on the scaffolding, into which he again climbed with more than usual agility. On reaching his elevation he was more than glad to find that he had not gone away with the trap-door uncovered, a fact which might betray his discovery sooner than he desired. Artfully concealing the opening, he once more made his way down into the body of the church, where he paused long enough to look at his watch.

He could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw that it was almost midnight, but there was a certain consolation in the fact that everyone was in bed, offering less danger of curious eyes seeing him. Locking the church door behind him, he seized the painting and started for home. Several blocks were passed before he discovered that he was moving at a terrific rate, as though someone were pursuing him in the darkness, and to avoid attracting attention he changed his pace. In spite of his leisurely manner, however, everyone he met seemed to take an extra look at him as he passed.

Lanning's journey home that night was filled with many imaginary adventures, and the thoughts of it remained in his memory for many a day. Arriving at the shop door, even the old lock seemed to have gone back on him as it refused to work until after a dozen efforts or more, while every neighbor in the block seemed to have selected that particular night for coming home late, to find him fumbling at the miserable lock.

It is always thus with the man who takes his first step in the life of crime, especially when there is still left some trace of a soul in him. All his senses seem to cry out against his action, urged on by a God-given imagination which, as the camera of the soul, can so truthfully depict the beautiful and the sinful. The voice of conscience is ever calling its owner from his danger, until the sweet word of the temptation drowns it all and the victim falls, to wake mayhap, at some future day, to a realization of what he has done.

The great clock in the nearby tower was booming out the hour of one, when Lanning sat, or rather threw, himself into his solitary chair, after securely locking the door and drawing the curtains, assuring himself that every detail of seclusion was looked after. Thoughtlessly drawing his hand across his forehead, he found the perspiration standing out in beads. "What a fool I am to be so worked up over nothing."

As though to deny himself time for foolish regrets, he went over to the table and turned the lamp high up and then, seizing the treasured canvas, he unrolled it full length on his bed. As he did so a small piece of parchment, yellow with age, fell at his feet. Picking it up

rather gingerly, Lanning moved over closer to the light, where, with much difficulty, he made out the following words in old English lettering:

"I do not wish it, nor do I pray for it, but I feel that an evil day shall come upon anyone who shall use this painting for any purpose other than the salvation of souls. Let it not be removed from this tomb if it is to be sold for worldly pleasure. FATHER C."

A faint feeling suddenly came over the guilty artist when he saw the signature of the writer. Who could it be but Father Colton? "Impossible; it cannot be," thought he, half aloud. "These things would never have been left in such a place." The absurdity of the notion made him smile feebly at his own credulity, while he dismissed the implied threat with the remark, "Nothing but rank superstition—this nineteenth century is too wide-awake for such nonsense." Crumbling the note savagely in his fingers, he threw it into the fire.

Once more he turned his attention to the beautiful canvas on the bed and finding that it was a little too crowded in that position he gently lifted it onto a temporary frame which stood in the corner. The finger of time had not tampered with the beauty of the coloring to any great extent, but left it almost as fresh and lifelike as when it came from the brush of the master. A few webbed cracks in the oil-coating served only to prove the age and nobility of the masterpiece. As he stood there admiring the treasure of the great master, the eye of Ned Lanning betrayed the pleasure, not of the studious artist, but of the thief gloating over the value of his haul, painting in his wild imagination the possibilities of the future.

It was just two o'clock in the morning when the restless artist was putting out his light, while the tramp of the night-watch going by made him listen for a moment. Who knows but the guardian of the peace muttered the same words that were spoken once before in front of the artist's door, "Good people do not need the cover of darkness for their labors."

The next day found Ned Lanning in bed until a late hour, where he lay musing over the past events, half in doubt as to their reality. This doubt was soon removed when his eye rested on the painting at the foot of his bed. As though to ward off any regretful thought as to the prudence of his action, he rose hurriedly and prepared for the work of copying the precious model.

In his anxiety to be rid of the last canvas, he almost forgot that Father Colton was still in ignorance of the discovery of the casket. In a moment he dropped his palette and brushes and hastily taking his cap, rushed out in the direction of the church, rehearsing in his mind as he went along the course of action he would pursue.

From where he stood in the doorway of the church as he was about to enter, he was more than relieved to notice that the opening in the wall was well concealed by the scaffolding, assuring him that the priest was still in ignorance of the discovery. Striving to arouse himself to an excitement which he did not feel, Lanning rushed into the house and called to Father Colton from the foot of the stairs.

"Father Colton, are you up there?" On receiving an answer from the priest, who came to the top of the stairs, Ned continued, "Come over to the church right away, Father; I want to show you a discovery I have made."

"I'll be down immediately, my boy," answered the priest.

Half afraid to meet his friend, the artist returned to the church, where he uncovered the opening in the wall, just as Father Colton succeeded in reaching the scaffold-landing. In spite of his effort there was something in Lanning's conduct which would have betrayed him to one more distrustful than the priest, but in the excitement of the moment the hypocrisy of the thief did not show itself. In fact, Lanning nursed a slight curiosity on his own part to know the contents of the mysterious casket, and this feeling made up to a certain extent for his lack of real perturbation.

As soon as he recovered his breath, Father Colton stood gazing at the curious aperture in open-eyed amazement. "What's this, what's this?" he enquired, anxiously. "It looks like a doorway."

"You're right, Father," answered Lanning; "it is a doorway. I was scraping off the wall last night when my knee accidentally dislodged a strip of plaster, revealing to my astonishment this very opening. You can see for yourself that it is a clear-cut doorway leading down into a space between the walls. I gathered up enough courage to go down into that hole, and what do you think I found?"

"What was it?" queried the priest, like a boy listening to a fairy tale.

"It is an old iron chest of some kind, and it looks and feels as though it might contain something of value. It was too heavy for me to think of bringing it out without some assistance." There was the slightest trace of a quiver in Lanning's voice as he informed the priest about

the casket, while at the same time the painting stood before his mind's eye with tantalizing mockery. What a game he was playing—but he had gone too far now to turn back.

"This certainly is a discovery," answered Father Colton, in a voice that betrayed his perturbation. "I am afraid I will have to begin telling ghost stories after this adventure. Why did you not tell me about it last night?"

"Well, Father, you see it was this way: I came over here rather late yesterday evening and set to work getting the wall into shape for the next picture, when I discovered this trap-door. In the excitement I lost all notion of time, so curious was I to find out what was down below there. It was just a few minutes to midnight when I finished my exploration, and I do not think you would relish a call at that hour of the night, so I let it go until this morning."

"The first thing we must do now, my boy," interrupted the priest, "is to find some way of getting that chest out of there. There is a ladder, you say, leading down into the hole; do you think it would stand my weight? Do you think the two of us could manage the chest?"

"I think so, Father. The first ladder is surely strong enough for both of us, but the second one below is rather weak, as I took a tumble myself last night."

"Well, you take the lantern and a rope and go ahead, while I follow. If I do not come up alive you can have all my wealth, which will never cause you any worry."

Lanning managed to get inside and descended a few steps, while the priest, with more or less effort, succeeded in forcing his body into the aperture until he stood

on the top rung of the ladder, from where he looked down into the darkness. That look was enough to convince him that it was healthier on better known grounds, nor was he long in making his way out again, remarking as he did so, "I am getting too stiff for this work, Lanning; you might find me at the bottom ahead of you if I were to attempt to go any farther. I have lost all my nerve, so I will have to let you go down alone. If you can tie the rope to the box, I'll help to pull it up from here."

The artist soon found his way down to the scene of his midnight adventure, where he stood for a few moments until he grew accustomed to the light of his lantern. After much effort he succeeded in securing the rope around the casket and then dragged it over to the opening in the floor above him. With the aid of Father Colton on the outside landing, he finally managed to lift the box into the upper chamber. After several trips up and down the ladder a block and tackle attachment was rigged up, by means of which, after many a pause for breath, the casket was safely lifted onto the upper landing, where the two gazed at the long-hidden object in wonder. Seeing the futility of attempting to open it there, they lowered it once more into the body of the church proper, from where they carried it into the house.

Father Colton could hardly wait until the ropes were untied before he set to work with hammer and chisel to open the mysterious box, which yielded to the attack only after many a pause and several bruised fingers. Neither Lanning nor the priest said a word as they worked away, each one striving to guess what could be the nature of the contents. Hurriedly lifting the rusted cover,

Father Colton beheld the most curious set of sacred vessels that he had ever seen, rudely fashioned in the purest gold. The treasure was none other than that hidden, three centuries ago by old Father Christopher, the night before the mob sacked his church.

To say that Father Colton was pleased would not describe his feelings; he was simply childish in his delight as he handled each treasure, taking them out one by one to place them on the table. In all there were two golden chalices of antique design, a small crucifix, somewhat rudely fashioned perhaps, but beautiful withal, and four large plates of hammered gold, while underneath was an old manuscript copy of the scriptures.

When all the precious contents were placed upon the table, Father Colton turned to his young friend and said: "Ned, my boy, I have you to thank for all these beautiful things. You have made the discovery of the age. What a story those sacred relics could tell of some long-vanished day, had they the power of speech; what a tale of plundering and robbery do they not suggest, for surely no man of God would have taken these from the service of the altar unless it were to save them from the hands of some ravager. They are restored to God's church once more, and all because I was lucky enough to make your acquaintance. There is one more restitution even more valuable than this, which I hope you will make some day—your immortal soul. Lanning, my boy, if I thought for one moment that by putting these relics back into their tomb, I could induce you to practice your religion, I would do so this minute."

For a moment Ned's heart came up into his throat at the mention of "one more restitution," thinking that

the priest by chance might have discovered the game he was playing, but he was more than relieved when the priest finished his remark. Half choking from shame and fear lest he might betray himself, he managed tc blurt out, "Not now, Father, not now. You will please excuse me, as I am anxious to get back to the shop."

Father Colton, who had come to know the humors of his young friend, attributed his abruptness to one of these spells, and thought nothing of the matter. Without giving the priest time to question him further, Lanning rushed down the stairs and out into the street, where the fresh air seemed to give him great relief after the terrible struggle that had taken place within him. Many a time he was on the point of confessing all to his friend, but something kept the words back in his throat. Now, it was too late. He chose the bribe of dishonesty in preference to the friendship of the man whose presence he was already beginning to hate.

Once in the street, he hastened home, pausing only to direct a kick at a stray dog that sided up to him in a friendly way. His one desire now was to finish the last painting and then fly from the whole miserable business. Day and night he sat at his easel working incessantly, taking time only to get a bite to eat when his tired body could no longer stand the strain. In the remarkable time of five days and nights he put the finishing touch to the painting, and then, utterly exhausted, he threw himself on his cot, where he fell into a deep sleep.

When Lanning awoke from his long rest, it was to find that a whole day had slipped his recollection, while his clock told him that the city of London was wrapped in slumber. On recovering from the stupor of his long

sleep, the first object upon which his gaze rested was the finished copy of the "Crucifixion." It was a faithful reproduction of the original which hung beside it. As though prompted by a sudden idea, he seized his coat and hat and carefully rolling up the copy, he lifted it under his arm and went out.

With his private key he found entrance to the church after fumbling in the darkness for a match with which to light his lantern. Locking the door behind him, he mounted into the scaffolding with his burden. With several thicknesses of old paper and canvas he covered the opening in the wall, and after about an hour succeeded in tacking the last painting in its place, rejoicing in his miserable heart that his contract was now completed. For several hours the sound of his hammer disturbed the silence of the church in the work of removing the scaffolding, and if ever a man worked against time, it was Ned Lanning, so quickly and so surely did he accomplish his task. Strange, indeed, that the noise in the church did not disturb Father Colton, for Lanning with a sigh of relief deposited the last piece of lumber in the church-yard without attracting the attention of anyone. The vague sense of honor which held him to the completion of his contract, produced in him a feeling of disgust for the work which he had undertaken with so much pleasure, and with a last glance at the little church, he disappeared in the darkness.

On the day preceding the hanging of the last painting, Father Colton was sitting in his study looking over the old manuscript which had been found with the sacred vessels, thinking to discover some sign of a date within its pages. A small note in the corner of the back cover

attracted his attention. It was written in Latin and was nothing else than a list of the articles which had been hidden in the chest. He was about to close the book in disappointment when he noted at the end of the list an item referring to an oil painting, which was evidently one of the articles included.

"Could it be possible," thought he, "that Lanning overlooked the parcel in the darkness? The chest was too small to hold even an ordinary-sized canvas." The more he puzzled over the matter, the greater became his curiosity to learn more about the missing painting, feeling that it might have been overlooked accidentally in the excitement of the discovery. Dismissing the matter from his mind, he determined to call on his young friend in the morning and ask him about it.

On his way out to say Mass the following morning, what was the surprise of the priest when he saw that the scaffolding had all been cleared away, and a beautiful painting of the "Crucifixion" fixed in its place over the side-altar, completely hiding the aperture in the wall. To say that Father Colton was surprised at this sudden change in the surroundings would put it very mildly; in fact, the whole affair began to assume a very mysterious aspect.

It was only at the breakfast table that the first suspicion that everything was not just right came into Father Colton's mind. It struck him as most strange that this last painting was put in place during the night, as though the artist desired to conceal his movements. Even the little formality of an unveiling was forgotten or intentionally avoided for some reason known to Lanning alone.

The priest remained at the table much longer than was his custom that morning, striving to discover in his own mind some reason for the mysterious conduct of his young friend, but to no avail. At length he rose from his place and retired to the sitting-room, where he once more succumbed to the influence of serious thought, while the morning mail lay untouched on the table. With a sigh of disappointment at his inability to find an explanation, he seized the morning paper and proceeded to scan the headings for the news of the day, but if his glance was fixed on the page before him, his thoughts were running in another direction.

After he had read the same article over and over again without retaining the slightest notion of its contents, his free hand suddenly came down with a thud upon his knee as he muttered half aloud: "The lost painting." The thought came upon him so abruptly that he let the paper fall at his feet and leaned his elbow upon the table and bent his head in deepest thought. It was the only possible solution that could account for his young friend's action, and yet the horror of the suggestion made the priest endeavor to dismiss the idea from his head by attempting again and again to become interested in his paper.

In vain did he seek to drive the thought from him, but it seemed to be written in every line of the page he was reading. The more he dwelt upon the matter the more did his suspicion develop into the confirmed fact. "Can Lanning have become a thief? The picture must have been hidden with the casket and it is hardly possible

that he could have overlooked it. The painting must have been a valuable one, a fact which would hardly escape the eye of an artist."

"Oh, pshaw," said he, as he arose from his chair. "Here I have been sitting manufacturing all the evil thoughts I can against the poor fellow, while God knows I should seek him out and give him a chance to defend himself. If he is guilty I may yet save him. What is the most valuable painting in the world compared to the loss of an immortal soul?"

Taking his hat and cane, the priest immediately left the house with the intention of finding the artist. In about ten minutes he stood before the door of Lanning's little shop, only to find the blinds drawn and the door locked. Repeated knocking brought no response from within, nor were the neighbors able to give any information about the missing Ned. With a sad heart the priest once more turned towards home, but he had not gone very far when he turned his steps in the direction of the railroad depot, hoping that he might run across him while waiting to board an outgoing train.

"What a parting," thought he, as he came home late in the afternoon, after a futile search. "And yet I may be entirely wrong. May God grant that it be so. I will wait; I will wait. Who knows but that he will return in a day or two." The poor man, in order to lift the bitter thought from his weary mind, took his breviary from the table and lost himself in the solace of silent prayer. A day, a week, a month passed quickly and no word came from Ned Lanning to heal the wound he had inflicted on the man who had befriended him in the hour of poverty and want.

CHAPTER V.

AN AMERICAN DRUMMER.

ONE BRIGHT morning in the summer of 'ninety-five, a huge liner of the Cunard Company slowly steamed up the river into the harbor of New York, guarded by a small fleet of tiny tugs which tooted a warning to the smaller vessels of the approach of the giant of the ocean. It is really a magnificent sight to witness the docking of those huge greyhounds of the deep as they glide majestically into the smooth harbor waters, panting in their subdued breath as though fearing to frighten their miniature surroundings.

What a work of modern industry are these monarchs of the sea, and how small and insignificant are those tiny beings called men as they stand on the great deck. And yet, these same tiny beings are the builders of that huge hulk on which they appear to be so small. Is there any argument more convincing for the fact that there is a God-like soul in the body of man? There is nowhere that the immensity of the Creator impresses one more, whether he be atheist or Christian, than on the boundless deep, and then only with this difference, that the Christian is man enough to acknowledge his Creator, while the atheist is too cowardly to admit that which his very nature proclaims.

The whirr of the machinery, the churning of the waters, the clanking of the huge chains and the shouting of the men, amid the hiss of the escaping steam, all add to the interest of the bystander at the landing of these big vessels. The passengers, pent up in that great house-boat for days at a time, now rush down the gang-plank with a strange look of expectant joy upon their faces, carefully scanning the awaiting crowd for trace of some friend or relative. Although there is a slight feeling of regret on leaving newly-made voyage friends, how good it seems to stand on God's land once more!

If there is a place in the world where people are less like savages and more like fellow beings, it is on board ship in mid-ocean. The most insignificant little incidents will form an excuse for an acquaintance and sometimes for a lasting friendship between the passengers. It may only be the need of a match, an exchange of newspapers, a remark about the weather or some other equally trivial thing, which is the occasion for the most interesting friendship.

Everyone seems to be happy, and yet each one is the victim of a certain concealed feeling of uneasiness, arising from the knowledge that there is a very thin wall of timber and steel separating them and eternity. Even the nabob of the first cabin will seek the society of the steerage passengers, forgetting that his nobility or wealth forbids him here, as on land, to lower his precious person to such surroundings.

Thus are men in time of mutual danger, whether real or imaginary, much more natural in their dealings with one another. As soon, however, as Mr. Nabob feels the solid floor of his business-office under his feet, he at once

assumes that same hypocritical stare with which he tries to convince the world that he has a monopoly on a commodity called intelligence. No longer is he the man we met on shipboard, for he has changed his manner as he did his traveling suit. There are many grand exceptions to this fairly general rule, but they are so few that they are not easily forgotten. Well, dear reader, such is the world and its inhabitants, and we must take it as it is.

In the lobby of a certain Broadway hotel in New York, which we shall call "The Mansion House," there sat a young man, dressed in a well-cut suit of brown with a traveler's cap thrown back on a rather prominent forehead. With his feet resting on a chair before him and his body huddled loosely in the place where he sat, he peered through the smoke of his cigar at the people who passed back and forth before the hotel window.

His handsome face betrayed the presence of deep thought, while his fingers tapped nervously on the arm of his chair; but withal there was a listless appearance about the young fellow as though he had neither desires nor worries to disturb his indolent attitude. Our reader will no doubt suspect that the young man is no other than Ned Lanning, and he will be correct.

He was now beginning to taste the life for which he had longed many a day, and for which he had sacrificed so much; nor was the exchange unpleasant after all, so much was it in contrast to the dark past. His longing desire to become a successful artist was now cast aside for the pleasures of independent idleness.

His first move on landing in New York was to deposit a well-filled wallet of English bank notes in one of those American institutions, the front of which is made to look

as much as possible like some medieval fortress in order to convince the wavering depositor of the impregnable security of the building against the attack of bold street robbers, while the greatest danger lies with the educated thief on the inside. With five thousand dollars to his account, Lanning felt that there was nothing but sunshine ahead for him.

The stolen painting he disposed of for the small sum of one thousand pounds, having no trouble in finding a willing buyer for the masterpiece. In years gone by, the thief might have been closely questioned about the history of the painting, but that day was gone by, for the dealers of London were too shrewd to doubt the honesty of the seller, especially when such a doubt might mean the loss of a very healthy bargain. The London market, in fact, was well supplied with the treasures of art which found their way there from the despoiled churches of France. The discovery of a new masterpiece was no longer the full column topic of the press, because the wary thieves of the French republic were making such discoveries an every-day occurrence.

The hotel in which we found Ned Lanning, catered, not so much to family patronage as it did to the men who were "on the road," or in other words to men who were known as drummers or agents. It was one of those hotels which, according to the traveling men's way of thinking, "made good"—a purely American phrase meaning that you get what you pay for.

There is perhaps no country in the world which can boast of such a hustling, wide-awake class of traveling salesmen as these United States. There is no spot within civilization, no matter how remote or inaccessible it may

be, which does not betray the footprints and posters of an American drummer. When the traveling public, with common consent, will agree that the weather is too disagreeable for ordinary mortals and remain at home, the trains will usually be occupied by the invincible drummer.

Lanning was in the midst of a mental scene of his last night in London and was just trying to imagine what Father Colton thought of his sudden departure, when he felt a sudden tap on the shoulder. If it had been the blow of a sledge hammer it would not have startled the guilty dreamer more.

"What are you selling, partner?" asked a young fellow about his own age. "It's funny how a man will jump sometimes. I did not mean to frighten you that way, but I thought you looked too gloomy to be without company. What's your line?"

"What's my line?" answered Lanning, with a smile of enquiry. "I don't quite catch your meaning."

"Well, I guess I'm wrong this time," answered the other. "I was sure I could tell a pal of the road when I saw the way he held his cigar, but this is one on me. I was almost certain you were one of the grip, as I looked at you sitting here; but I ask your pardon, seeing my mistake."

"Oh, there is no need for pardon," put in Ned, warming up to the young fellow. "Your guess was not far wrong. A man who has no place he can call home must admit that he is on the road. I just came over from London to see this great country of which we read so much abroad, and perhaps I may find something to do in

the meanwhile. For the latter, I am not in much of a hurry, as I have a little to keep me for a while in the ranks of the idler."

"You won't be able to sit around here very long, friend, after the fever gets a hold on you. Every one over here has the microbe with the dollar sign in his system, except those who are good neither for themselves nor for others. Why, the buzz and whirr of things will soon wear the covering off your conscience until you can't keep your feet quiet and you simply have to hustle—even though your purse is a little fat. I'll wager you won't be here a month before you will be shoving and pushing with the rest of us."

"Perhaps you are right about that, friend," answered Lanning; "but I am going to act the lord for awhile; I've been drudging a little too long for my taste."

"This is no place for lords or barons," put in the stranger, "and you'll find that out before you are here long. The American man of money, if he wants to idle, must find his way over to Europe and buy some old castle where the example of his indolent neighbors will soon make him feel at home. We have no such people here, but we have a nobility which is recognized by the size of its bank account, built up from good hard labor. I must admit, however, that I have done my share of labor, but my bank account is not big enough to permit me to take care of my Lady's poodle."

They both laughed at this turn of the conversation, while Lanning said: "By the way, friend, I would like to know your name. Mine is Ned Lanning, one time artist and decorator, now an idler with no particular harbor in view."

"My name," answered his companion, "is Bob Larmon. At present I am traveling for Brown & Company of New York, striving to make every man I meet believe that he is in need of a suit of clothes, and that I am the only man in the world who can supply him. For eight years now I have been on the road, and I guess I'll always be on the road, for I don't see much loose coin around after pay-day."

"Well, Bob, I'm glad to know you; it seems good to meet a willing friend in this great land, especially when a fellow knows nothing about the country except the name of the hotel in which he is stopping, and that's my situation exactly."

"Now see here, Mr.—— pshaw! that mister business is too much for me; I'm going to call you just plain Lanning. Well, as I was about to say, I rather like your style, and for that reason I am going to let you into a secret if you promise not to tell. I've got the best boarding place in the city of New York, and there is room there for a good young fellow like you. This hotel business is all right for a meal or two, but there is no place like home."

"I am thankful for your interest in me, Bob, and I believe I will take advantage of your kind invitation. About what time will you be going over there?"

"I am ready any time you are. Run up and get your grip and things and I will wait for you here. I want to talk to a fellow over in the corner there for a few minutes." Lanning secured his belongings after about ten minutes' absence, and came down again, to find Lar-

mon waiting for him. After settling his account with the house the two young fellows went out together, chatting away like old friends.

While they were waiting for a car, Bob turned to his companion and remarked: "By the way, Lanning, that name of yours sounds like the 'Old Sod,' and yet it is a little strange when you come to think of it."

"You've struck it right, Bob, as Ireland is the land of my birth, but I have been over in England for a number of years. Our name was not very common in the old country, and for that reason is somewhat misleading."

"I suppose it is like my own in that regard. You ought to hear the folks at the boarding-house laugh when I try to tell them that I am as strongly Irish as they are. They won't believe me, no matter what I say, so I got tired trying to prove it. If you can only convince Mrs. Mellody—that's the name of the lady of the house, and a fine, good woman she is—if you can convince her that Lanning is an Irish name, you've got the best kind of a recommendation. She's awful particular about her boarders, but if she takes a liking to you, you'll find that you've got a second mother."

After about twenty minutes' ride they left the car and in a few moments stopped in front of a neat-looking home of the conventional type in the larger cities. It was built on a plot of generous dimension, and boasted of a pleasant little garden at its side. Without pausing to ring the bell, Bob led his companion in and began in a boyish way to call for Mrs. Mellody at the top of his voice.

The good lady was hurrying into an apron which she kept "for nice," as she used to say. Giving her no time to

apologize for her appearance, as she was always wont to do on the approach of company, Bob took her to one side, and pretended to whisper, "Mother, I have made a discovery today, and here he is. Would you mind letting an anarchist room here with us?" Then turning to his companion he said, "This is Mr. Lanning, mother, but that is his Sunday name. His every-day name is Ned."

"Now, Bobby, you are always trying to scare me, and yet I always find you out. Who ever heard of a man with the name of Lanning being an anarchist? I am glad to meet you, sir, and you are welcome."

"Mrs. Mellody," answered Ned, "if you heard all the good things Bob had to say about you, I'm sure you would forgive him for trying to deceive you. I have no one to recommend me, but I hope you will permit me to board here with you."

"Mr. Lanning, your name and your honest face are recommendation enough for me. My boy, Bobby, as I call him, knows good company when he sees it, so come right upstairs and I will show you the room. I'm only hoping 'twill please you."

On the way up, Bob jokingly remarked, "There is only one objection to boarding in this house, and that is Mrs. Mellody's habit of making everyone in the place take spring medicine every two weeks all year around."

"Arrah, don't mind him, sir; he is forever talking nonsense. I know him too well to pay any attention to him. This is the room here now—it is just next to Bobby's, and I hope you will like it. There is quite as much sunlight in it as in the others, but the furniture is not just as I would like to have it."

As she was speaking she walked over to the other side of the room and said: "I am forever forgetting to put holy-water in the font, but you know the heat dries it out so quickly. I'll have some for you tomorrow."

"The room is very cozy, Mrs. Mellody," answered Ned, "and I am sure I shall feel right at home here. I must go back and see about my trunk now and return in time for supper."

"Supper will be ready exactly at six, so please try to be here on time, as John, my husband, does not like to be kept waiting when he comes in from work."

"I'll be back long before that," answered Ned, "unless I get lost on the way. Will you have time to come along and show me the way, Bob?"

"Surely, Lanning. I talked you into this much and I'm going to see you through it. You will never come late a second time after you find out what a fine supper Mrs. Mellody prepares—it's the best outside of the Waldorf."

That same evening Lanning found himself the center of one of the cheeriest little family circles to be found in New York. At the time of Ned's arrival in the home the family consisted of but three members—the parents and one daughter, three older children having gone out West and settled for themselves.

The daughter, who was the baby of the family, was just budding into a pleasing young lady and had come to be quite a help in the support of the family. Bob, who was a sort of an adoption in the home, took it upon himself to sustain the interest of the conversation at the supper-table, in which task he was ably seconded by Mrs. Mellody; while the daughter, Eileen, maintained a silent

reserve in presence of the stranger. The father contented himself with an occasional word, while he looked intently at the newcomer out of the corner of his eye. Bob, with a sense of delight, every now and then would toss a teasing remark at the daughter, who endeavored to pass it off with a half-meaning frown, as though to remind him that there was company present.

The supper over, all went into the parlor, even Mrs. Mellody, who broke a very sacred rule by allowing the dishes to stand. The presence of the stranger brought forth the paternal request that Eileen render a few Irish airs on the piano, which she very gracefully proceeded to do, knowing how well it would please her parents.

There were no parents in the land who were prouder of their daughter than John and Mary Mellody, and it was not without reason. The poor girl did not have the advantages of many of her college-bred friends, but she deserved a great deal of credit for her efforts at self-culture, making the most of a few spare moments after her work in the evenings.

Old John's head nodded in continual approval as the music proceeded, as though to say, "That's my own daughter—now, who'd ever think that John Mellody had such a fine girl?"

The climax of the evening came when the wife turned to John and asked him to sing the favorite, which was always held in reserve for grand occasions only. "Now, John, let us have that fine old song you sing so well, 'Fogarty's Cake.' Give it to us, now, like a good man, in honor of the new boarder."

"Mary, will you hould your whisht—do you want to

make a show of me entirely? It's you that knows I can't sing a note."

"Come, now, John, dear, and don't be making excuses. Don't let people know you're getting old. You know," said she, turning to Ned, "he's only waiting to be coaxed, like all the good singers. He's forever correcting me when I'm humming around the house, telling me I'm flat, whatever that means."

"Mary alanna, will you hould your tongue, and don't vex me? Sure, if I could sing I'd be only too glad to please the young people, although, if I do say it myself, I could hould a note or whistle a chune with the best of them, and that was only a few years ago, mind you. It would do your heart good to hear the music we had in dear old Ireland, and it wasn't the phonygraph kind, either. The fiddle and the pipes was the best medicine we had when we were boys—that's the reason we have so many hospitals in this country, just because we have no real music nowadays."

"Well, Mr. Lanning," said Mrs. Mellody, the self-appointed director of the evening, "perhaps you have a chune or two you could give us."

"I am afraid, Mrs. Mellody, that I will not be able to make much of an impression as a musician after the playing of Miss Mellody. I'll try to do my best."

Eileen vacated her place at the piano, and Lanning was soon picking out a few chords which his mother had taught him as a child. With a clear, mellow baritone he began the old familiar air, "The Last Rose of Summer." His success called for another and another, all of which he rendered equally well, except that his attention was, every little while, turned towards old John, who

sat at his elbow, clearing his throat now and then, as though he had swallowed something. In the process the poor man elicited many a frown from his wife, who knew what was coming.

The singer had just finished one verse of "Then You'll Remember Me," and was about to begin the second, when John gave a last violent cough, as though he had dislodged the obstacle in his throat, and, interrupting Ned, he asked him: "Can you play 'Fogarty's Cake' for me? I do believe that my voice is still with me."

The interruption brought a veritable storm down on the old man's head from his wife and daughter, until Ned arranged matters by declaring that he knew no more verses of the song he had been singing, and requested John to sing the favorite.

As a preliminary, the old man began by trying to give him the key, first by whistling a few bars and then by humming a few more. Just when Ned thought he had found the corresponding chord, John started off in a key as yet undiscovered on any musical instrument. Puffing away as though the task engaged every muscle of his body, while his heel kept time by tapping on the floor, he waded through the words of about twenty verses, beginning each one with the usual "M-m-m-Oh."

Seeing the impossibility of trying to harmonize with the singer, Lanning contented himself with soft-pedal music, fearing to stop lest he should muddle the old man, who paid no more attention to the accompaniment than if the piano were silent. The song finally ended in a burst of applause, led by Bob and Ned, while the singer began to tell of vocal achievements in years gone by.

Lanning was sitting in assumed admiration and suppressed mirth at John's effort, when Mrs. Mellody, rather ashamed of her own musical ignorance, turned and asked him if he could play some old tune of which she had forgotten the name, saying, "I don't mind the name of it now, but you might catch the chune of it from the movement of my heel."

With that she raised her apron so that Ned could follow the movement of her foot, and began to beat the time of the song she had in mind, without even attempting to hum it.

There sat Lanning in agony of suppressed laughter, with no other way of discovering the forgotten air than by following the movement of the musical indicator.

Bob, who had been sitting quietly enjoying the evening's entertainment, now let forth an unearthly yell of laughter, and was immediately joined by Lanning, who was waiting for some excuse to relieve the terrible strain he was undergoing. John, whose musical ability had been proven beyond all doubt by his previous effort, now assumed the right to judge his wife's ignorance also, and, with his boisterous laugh, soon had the whole room in an uproar.

At this unwarranted conduct, as she considered it, Mrs. Mellody at first wanted to make herself feel offended, but when she thought it over she began to think that after all she had done something ridiculous, and in her good nature joined the merriment.

The little gathering soon broke up because the director of the evening, partly out of revenge and mostly because it was growing late, started for the kitchen, where her daughter and herself proceeded to clear the supper-table.

In the middle of the work the good woman paused long enough to whisper: "Eileen, dear, what was your father laughing at—it is too knowing he is getting in his old days. I did not do anything foolish, did I, daughter?"

"No, mother, dear; we were only laughing at the way you kept your foot going—it did appear so funny. Father thinks he is the only musician in the house just because he knows 'Fogarty's Cake.' But tell me, mother, what do you think of the new boarder?"

"Well, I haven't had time to do much thinking since he came. He has a good Irish face, and if he is like the Lannings I knew at home in Ireland, he's a good young man."

The one-time artist retired to rest that night with a feeling of gratitude towards Bob Larmon, for having brought him into contact with such good, whole-souled people, knowing that he had been most fortunate in finding one of those old-fashioned homes in which happiness reigns continually. He was just dozing off into his first sleep when he heard Mrs. Mellody's voice at Bob's door, saying: "Bobby, boy, don't forget your night prayers; you've been away now these three weeks and I was afraid you might be getting into bad habits. Good night."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERIOUS BOARDER.

THE FOLLOWING morning the new boarder was reminded of the fact that it was Sunday, when he heard the mistress of the house at Bob's door, calling him in time to go to church. Indeed, it was with a purpose that the good woman pounded and called unusually loud, so that her new charge also should hear her. Bob, scared out of all inclination to roll over once more, by the vicious assault on his door, arose hurriedly and was not long in dressing in his usual immaculate style. Mrs. Mellody had too much confidence in the new boarder to repeat her strenuous summons on his door, so she left Lanning to his own resources in rising for church, having satisfied her conscience in arousing her indolent Bob.

Breakfast over, and all the other members ready to leave, and still there was no sign of the new boarder, so they went out, expecting the sleeper to find his way to a later Mass. To say that Mrs. Mellody regarded this violation of a very important rule with a feeling of indifference would be to belie the good woman's character. There was not the least doubt in her mind as to Lanning's religion, and it made her feel somewhat guilty in leaving one of her boarders at home, when he should be at church, as she considered herself responsible for the religion of her household.

There was consternation, indeed, when she came home to find Lanning just coming down stairs, for the hour was then too late to think of going to Mass at all; nor did he seem to betray any concern about the matter. This terrible discovery led to a secret conclave around the kitchen stove, at which even Bob had a hearing, to whom Mrs. Mellody turned hurriedly and said:

"I do believe you were half right, Bobby, when you said you brought us an anarchist. Sure, Mr. Lanning is neither a Catholic nor a Protestant. A decent Protestant will go to church on Sunday, and a man cannot be a Catholic and stay away from Mass. I'm beginning to think he is a heathen entirely, and think of it, his name is Lanning!"

"Oh, mother," interrupted Eileen, "hear how you are going on about the poor fellow, and how do we know but that he is not well this morning?"

"Wissha, daughter, I never once gave that a thought," answered the mother, shamefacedly. "I'm sure the Lord will punish me for the evil use of my tongue. You are a better girl than your mother ever was, the Lord forgive me." The gentle reprimand of the daughter ended the conversation, while the two began preparations for the dinner. As she was peeling the potatoes she turned to Eileen and said:

"I'm going to give him a good dinner for talking about him, and I'll make a little chicken broth to warm him up. And, Eileen, dear, go to the trunk and get those nice spoons—you'll find them wrapped in a piece of white flannel—and put them on the table. And, Eileen, there's the old Irish plate of grandmother's—bring that out too,

but be very careful of it—it will give the poor boy an appetite to eat off an Irish plate.

As though she had already paid the debt of restitution in a most generous way, she went about, once more busying herself with the meal, humming a snatch of some old familiar air.

In a short while the dinner was steaming on the table and it required no second invitation to induce the menfolks to take their places. As the father was saying grace, Ned caught himself in time to remain standing for the prayer, and even succeeded in making the sign of the cross, as he had not done since his father died.

To allay a faint suspicion which had crept into her mind, Mrs. Mellody could not resist the temptation of glancing over at Lanning during prayer. The sign of the cross brushed away all her doubts in a moment, and she immediately began to do all that her motherly kindness could do in order to make up for the mischief of her tongue. So well, in fact, did she succeed in her attention to Ned's wants, that her own John was obliged several times to ask for the salt, with no sign of being heard.

No one dared to comment upon the fact of Ned having missed Mass, and religion was the one topic which suffered exclusion in the conversation. Bob kept things pretty lively by telling his experiences on the road during the last two weeks, and surprised Eileen by reminding her that next Wednesday would be her birthday, and in accordance with the nature of the occasion, had purchased a small present which would be forthcoming at the proper time.

"Now, Bob," said Eileen, half in earnest, "I do not want you to be doing such things. Mother always said that you were foolish, and I am very much afraid I will be thinking the same before very long. However, I thank you very much for remembering my birthday, and I think it real kind of you."

"Now, Eileen, don't go scolding me here in presence of Lanning, or he will begin to think that I am crooked in my garret. I am usually selfish, and it makes me feel good to forget myself sometimes, in order to remember someone else."

Eileen blushed slightly at the concealed compliment and to change the subject asked: "How did the ball game end yesterday? I do hope New York won."

"It's the best thing you know," said Bob in the lingo of the road. "Chicago won't get a 'look in' at the pennant next year, nor for the next ten years, unless this big town falls into the ocean; then there will be such a splash that the rest of the country won't be able to swim out. By the way, Lanning, do you play baseball over in England?"

"Not to speak of, Bob, nor do I understand the game in the least. In Ireland we played hand-ball mostly, and a good, strenuous game it was."

"Say, Lanning, I can see your baseball wings sprouting already, and it will take only one game to put them in good shape. If you don't become a real 'fan' after your first visit to our ball-park, then I'm no Democrat. Baseball and politics are as necessary to the life of the American citizen as drinking water. The first time I am off I will take you over to see a good game; it does me more good than a hospital."

The conversation ended as all stood up to say the prayer after meals. The afternoon passed off quietly, except for an occasional warning from the father to his wife and daughter, to keep the Sunday paper together. To have the paper in disorder was just one thing which ruffled the even temper of old John Mellody, and in spite of his continual reminder, they were sure to have it scattered in all possible corners. There are some people who care not at what angle they begin the paper, and, like the Chinese, are content in commencing at any extremity; there are others also, who, for some reason or other, are disgruntled unless they find every page in order as they would find a book, and to this latter class John Mellody belonged, although he could give no valid reason for this peculiarity.

Leaving the father to his reading, Bob and Eileen went out together for a stroll, as was their usual custom on Sunday afternoons when Bob was at home. Between these two a very intimate friendship had sprung up, owing to the fact that Bob had, as it were, grown up in the family during the last ten years. On the other hand, Eileen was now becoming a very comely young lady, possessing a natural healthy charm which did not escape the interested eyes of young Larmon.

Her eyes were a deep brown, set off by a generous profusion of wavy, chestnut hair, while her face, although not exceptionally remarkable for its beauty, indicated a reserve fund of good common sense, which made Eileen a very desirable companion in the mind of her young admirer. Although she felt more than happy in Bob's company, she never gave him any reason to believe that he could be other than her favored companion, and it was

more as an affectionate brother and sister that the two spent their few leisure moments, striving to outdo each other in their attention to the old folks. Such was the situation when Lanning had the good fortune to enter the Mellody home.

The wealth of the family was not very great, as all the little earnings of the father were immediately swallowed up in paying for the little home, which struggled for an existence under a heavy mortgage. As soon as Eileen became old and strong enough, she startled her parents with the news that she was going to help pay for the home, and, in spite of the earnest protests of her father and mother, she left the house the following morning and secured a position in a department store.

Her joy was at full tide one evening, when she came home and ran over to where her father was sitting and threw her arms around his neck, saying: "Close your eyes, I've got a surprise." Before he was aware of what she was doing, she pressed her first pay-envelope into his hand and kissed him. As soon as he saw what it was, the father, with a tell-tale tear rolling down his cheek, lovingly embraced his child and said:

"Daughter, you were never going to hear one word from these lips, asking you to go out and work, even though I'd be forced to clean the streets of the city for a living. God bless you, child, for your help. May the day come very soon when I won't have to see you out slaving for your mother and myself; there are too many children in the street today without having my own Eileen there."

"But, papa, see how long mother and you have been working for *me,* and I never wanted for anything. I'm

going to try to be good to both of *you* from now on, because I am able to do a little to help pay for things." She smothered the words he was about to utter with a loving embrace and ran out to her mother in the kitchen, leaving the father to meditate on the fact that his child had become a factor in the hardened ranks of labor.

From that day on, Eileen had given every cent of her small earnings to her parents, even though her girlish heart was not indifferent to the influence of an attractive gown or some other article of feminine adornment. If her finances were somewhat limited at times, her ingenuity was opulent in its results, so that by a diligent use of her needle she had very little trouble in meeting the demands of the fashion of the day.

It is the curse of the age that forces so many of our young girls behind the department-store counter to spend the best years of their lives in an atmosphere which is all but conducive to their moral and physical health. The demands of modern industry have stalked right into the family circle and taken the mothers of the next generation from the salutary environments of family life to transplant them in the tear-watered soil of sweated labor. It is not beyond the memory of the reader to recall the time when the home was the center of woman's sole activity, where the children were permitted to grow into manhood and womanhood without having the stamp of industrial greed on their brows. What a change is coming over the family horizon! What will the future bring, when youthful innocence will be held at a premium, owing to the selfish demands of present-day industry? A fact realized, often becomes a cruel answer.

Raised in an atmosphere where generosity was a virtue and extravagance a vice, Eileen Mellody grew to be a very sensible young lady. Had he been more fortunate in the nature of his occupation, Bob Larmon might possibly have made more progress in his love affair but his enforced absence from home, during the greater part of the year, interfered somewhat with his plans.

He was a good-hearted young fellow and manly; lacking that hypocritical veneer which conceals the little blemishes in a man's character, permitting him to appear as perfection itself. By the so-called fashionable members of the community, Bob was just tolerated and no more, simply because his tongue was not smooth enough to deal out the honeyed nothings of society; while, on the other hand, he had the virtuous fault of being plain-spoken. With those who took the time to know him, Bob became a permanent favorite. Generous he was, to a fault, making the most of life by smiling away the little clouds that dry up so many happy dispositions and fill the hospitals and streets with so many dyspeptic cranks.

Lanning had gradually become an indolent fixture in the Mellody home, spending his time in reading and indifferent study, varied by an occasional stroll through the city. The daily routine of his existence was disturbed only by the voice of Mrs. Mellody, announcing the hour of meal-time. The little family circle was sadly formal with Bob absent, as Lanning was too much interested in his books to add much life to the surroundings. He was of too serious a mind to arouse much enthusiasm in any one, although his stories of his native land went far towards lending a few pleasant evenings to the home.

Eileen had never quite overcome the formality of their first meeting, and seemed reluctant to enter very freely into conversation. She was inclined to study him rather closely as he sat opposite her at the table, without, however, maintaining too serious an attitude towards him. Lanning's inactivity and lack of purpose by no means appealed to her, in contrast, as it was, to Bob's energetic nature.

The next Sunday morning Mrs. Mellody, from force of habit, was quietly making her way up to Bob's room, when she suddenly remembered that he was on the road. A noise from Lanning's room convinced her that he was already astir, so she turned and descended the stairs once more. In a moment all were ready for church, save the tardy boarder, who was left to follow as soon as he was ready.

"John," said the wife, when they were about a block from the church, "I forgot all about bringing the five cents for the collection. I left it on the kitchen shelf and must go back after it. You two walk on ahead."

"All right, Mary," said John, with half a frown; "you're always forgetting something. Don't be late, now."

But the poor woman was late, and her already flushed face assumed a beet-red color as she walked up the aisle, just as the priest was reading the gospel. She felt that the eyes of a thousand people were on her; but most of all, she knew that the priest was looking at her, as it seemed, for an age. With a fraction of a genuflection, which often bespeaks a rheumatic religion, but not in the present case, Mrs. Mellody fell, rather than walked,

into her place beside her husband, stepping on his pet corn in her hurry.

John harbored feelings which were far from holy when she planted her foot on forbidden ground, and he gave a cough, which was naught but a disguised grunt, in order to save himself from a terrible outburst. The poor woman felt uneasy all during Mass, especially when she heard John groaning out his prayers with more than usual emphasis. It was a danger signal which long experience had taught her to recognize. She was convinced that the week would be an unlucky one for her when she began Sunday in such a manner.

John, whose prayers were anything but devotional while his corn was pounding away, could not get out of the church soon enough to open the valve of his just indignation, and the already penitent wife was soundly berated before she was hardly out the door. Eileen smoothed over the troubled waters of the terrible catastrophe in her usual child-like manner, until the paternal wrath had somewhat abated. The innocent cause of the whole disturbance walked home in humble silence, attributing all her misfortunes to the fact of oversleeping that morning, and, in consequence, was forced to shorten her usual morning prayer.

The terrible events of the day were only augmented when they arrived home and found Ned lounging amid the scattered remnants of the Sunday paper, with no thought of church in his languid mind. It certainly was a dreadful shock to Mrs. Mellody's sense of duty and in her heart she really begrudged the little kindnesses she had shown him on the previous Sunday. With few words and many thoughts she began to prepare dinner;

nor did the nice spoons or the Irish plate come out of their hiding-place on that occasion. An atmosphere of strained formality prevailed during the meal, to such an extent, that Eileen was constrained to be less reserved than usual in Lanning's presence.

After dinner, John, whose injured corn had soured his disposition for the rest of the day, went off to take a nap, while Ned was left in sole possession of the paper in the parlor. Meanwhile, a consultation of a serious nature was taking place in the kitchen between mother and daughter, and there is no need to say that the topic of discussion was the mysterious boarder. "How could any man with a good Irish name like Lanning stay away from Mass of a Sunday morning?"

"Why, mother," answered Eileen, "we do not know whether he is a Catholic or not; we never asked him. And, besides, we did not do so well ourselves today, after you coming in late and murdering father's corn. I don't think our prayers were very devotional; I know mine were not what they should be, as I was thinking of the terrible scandal you gave."

"True for you, Eileen, it's not for me to be speaking of my neighbors after the way I have been going on of late. Oh, but I have to laugh when I think of poor John and his enormous corn; he was as mad as two crows in church this morning. And, Eileen, did the priest see me coming in late, do you think? I was ashamed of my life, and, besides, it was just the morning I had to wear my old hat with that homely feather in it. It will be a fine morsel for the neighbors to talk about after seeing Mrs. Mellody with her old duds on. Well, it can't be

helped now. I must speak to Mr. Lanning this evening about going to church; it will be better than talking behind his back all the time."

"Yes, mother, do, but you must be very careful not to offend him, as he may not care to talk about such matters."

The dinner dishes were soon washed and put away, while Mrs. Mellody proceeded to tidy the various rooms. As she gathered up the wraps which she had worn to church, her handkerchief fell at her feet, and with a frightened look she turned to her daughter and whispered so John could not hear her, "Eileen, do you know, I didn't put the five cents in the collection box after all—here it is, tied up in the handkerchief. I was that excited that I forgot to put it in when the box came around."

Unable to restrain herself, Eileen suddenly burst into a hearty laugh, which brought a half-conscious groan from the near-by bedroom, a signal by no means to be ignored. The frightened look on the mother's face and the ridiculous ending of the whole affair was indeed laughable, but the paternal warning soon repressed the disturbance, leaving the house wrapt in silence for the rest of the afternoon.

In the evening Mrs. Mellody artfully enticed Lanning into a quiet conversation in the sitting-room, and, in whatever manner she broached the subject, she soon won his confidence. The story was such that her motherly heart was moved to confess the wrong she had done him, while she asked his pardon several times over. Instead of blame, she had a feeling of pity for Lanning as she pictured her own child in the same situation.

After she had accomplished her mission to her own satisfaction, she felt that she had made full amends for all the blunders of that fatal Sunday; so, with a feeling akin to real contentment, she retired to her room, where she spent a little more time at prayer than usual. She believed that God had given her a duty to perform, and that was to bring the prodigal back to his Father's house. From that time on Lanning found in Mrs. Mellody not only a friend, but also a loving mother.

Ned's story was not long in passing around amongst the other members of the family, and with the mistress of the house as his champion, there was no one who had sufficient courage to retain even a doubt as to her claim that he was the epitome of all that was noble and praiseworthy.

A new life seemed to have begun for Lanning in that happy home. He felt as though he had no right to sit at table with that little band of laborers, while his greatest task consisted in striving to find something to occupy his time. In fact, his dream of bliss was assuming so cloudy an aspect that even his reading and study were beginning to lose their fascination. Was the life of ease worth the price he had paid for it? He was not averse to work, but the little temptation we all have to lay down the shovel when we can, found in him a willing victim, who was beginning to learn that there was a seamy side to everything, even to the happiness he had anticipated.

Early one morning, about a month after his arrival in the Mellody home, he started out with the firm determination to find work, if for no other purpose than to relieve the monotony of his daily existence. His well-filled purse no longer fostered that sense of independence

which at first he felt; rather had he become unconcerned about its existence. He had ample time in which to review the past, and the trail was not as luminous as he would have it.

He was yet in ignorance of the ways of the American spender, owing, perhaps, to the healthy influence of the home into which he had found his way, and hence his bank account was practically intact. The quieter moments of thought during the period of his inactivity aroused in him a half-hearted regret for that which was gradually assuming the aspect of a serious crime; not that the better teachings of religion had suddenly taken hold of him, but simply because he had so ruthlessly shattered the parental model of honesty and manliness.

To such an extent had Lanning's reflections influenced him, that a sense of repentance was quietly stealing over him, resulting in a feeble promise to restore his ill-gotten wealth at some future day, but only after he had the assurance of a decent living. Alas, how often do we put off our better resolve until the morrow, which never dawns! How frequently do we drown the voice of our better selves, awaiting in vain for its repetition in an hour that will never know the present!

Such was the problem that agitated the mind of the one-time artist, as he strolled into the bank to make his first demand on the guardians of his stolen wealth. As he presented his check he winced slightly under the penetrating gaze of the keen-eyed teller, realizing, as he did, that he had no right to that, for which he so shamefully brought dishonor on his own and his father's name. He was going in the wrong direction and he knew it.

The month of September found Lanning in overalls, handling a truck on the dock where he had first set foot on American soil. The work which he had now taken up was not exactly fitted for a student of art, but his craving for action compelled him to accept the first offer. He was not entirely opposed to hard labor, because he well knew that his health required something more strenuous than the indoor work of the past years. By no means a stripling, he was well built, and could readily adapt himself to the requirements of his new avocation. If he was looking for an active existence, he certainly found it in his present occupation as a longshoreman.

Longshoremen, as they are called, who form a very necessary cog in the ocean-liner's machinery, are not the most refined class of men in the world, a fact soon discovered by Ned Lanning. As a class, they are made up of all nationalities, with an outward roughness of manner in keeping with the heavy work they perform, but we are not thereby justified in viewing them as a set of murderers or criminals. On the contrary, they are, nearly all of them, good respectable citizens, while the greater number are fathers of large families.

Down deep in their rugged hearts is concealed a tenderness and generosity which is almost an unknown quantity in the ranks of those whose claim to refinement is based mostly on social hypocrisy. Let a poor laborer amongst them suddenly become an invalid through sickness or accident, and every pay envelope is gladly opened to contribute a dollar or two towards helping their companion in misery. So natural and unassuming, in fact, is their generosity, that there is a regularly appointed treas-

urer, whose duty it is to stand at the pay window and remind the men that John So-and-So is sick or injured and his family in need of assistance. The man who would slander those grimy sons of toil need go no further inland to find a better type of the real American citizen. I have spoken of them as a class, and there is no class without its prominent exceptions.

Their work consists in handling the great tons of freight which come and go with every ocean-liner. These immense vessels are no sooner cleared of their passengers, and even sometimes before, when the hold begins to belch forth its tons upon tons of cargo by means of a special block and tackle, which lifts with ease the load of a good-sized truck wagon. This huge crane piles up the freight on the dock as fast as the men can cart it away to the warehouses. There is no room there for the weakling or loafer; every one is on the run, pushing or pulling the mountains of boxes and bales to the storerooms. The shouting and pounding goes on day and night, until the incoming cargo has been cleared, and a fresh outgoing one taken its place. Those poor freight handlers earn every dollar of their wages. The sweat rolls off their haggard faces as though they were about to drop from sheer exhaustion, as the less hardy of them sometimes do. There is no let up until the roaring, rumbling whistle gives the signal that the liner's appetite for swallowing freight is appeased. If the labor is tiring and the hours are long during the rush, the other extreme is the case in the days of idleness spent in waiting for the next arrival.

The reader may ask why Lanning, an artist and man of leisure, should choose to accept such hard labor when

he might have avoided it, even though he could get nothing better. His fickle mind retained one idea, and that was the distaste he had so suddenly acquired for idleness, and in consequence he was glad to obtain work of any kind. There was another reason why he accepted the labor of the dock, and this was owing to a secret agreement between Mike Toohey, the foreman, and himself. His friend, who was known as "Big Mike" to the men in his charge, held out to him the promise of office work within a month if until that time he was willing to work on the dock. This sudden friendship between the two was due to the fact that Ned's father and the foreman happened to be old acquaintances in Ireland. The boss took a liking to the young man from the very start, and many a time as he beheld the son of Robert Lanning tussling with a load of freight he became more anxious to see him at more suitable work.

During the time in which Lanning was pushing a truck, as he called it, he became fairly popular with the men, due in part to the fact that his white hands indicated that their owner was unaccustomed to hard labor, although willing to bear it, but mostly because he was considered a good fellow. The off-days were spent entirely in sleeping and card playing, and to the latter Ned devoted himself with surprising aptitude, to such an extent that he became quite proficient as a player. The recreation might have been innocent enough but for the fact that the pay envelope was generally the medium of exchange, and often passed from its rightful owner into the hands of the shrewd gambler, whose ability was based, not merely on a few months' experience, but on a thorough schooling in its every phase.

Ned was a man who was not to be entirely overlooked in the game, but he could not expect to compete with those who had fully mastered it, and more than once he lost the entire earnings of a week. A rigorously observed rule of the dock permitted no man with a family to play for money, and only those who had no one depending upon them were allowed at the gaming table. Lanning had become indifferent to the value of money since the day he came by it so easily, and the little store in the bank was disappearing more rapidly than its owner knew, as he paid little attention to his accounts.

His popularity was in reality paid for, not only out of his hard-earned wages, but also out of his stolen money. The position, to which he had been looking forward for several months, was at last open to him, but this did not interfere to any great extent with his gambling propensities. With only an occasional period of good luck, he continued to lose at the card table. He had at last discovered one of the ways of spending his money, and he had little trouble in so disposing of it. The loss of a hundred dollars or so a week caused him little or no anxiety, because he knew where he could easily obtain more. And so it went on from day to day, and from week to week, until all at once he discerned the rock of destruction in the distance; but the demand of popularity was too great to turn him from his course.

His promotion on the dock was observed by more eyes than those of Mike Toohey and himself. There was another man who was self-conscious enough to imagine that he possessed all the necessary qualifications for any job, outside the presidency of the country, and this was the blustering Jack Turner, who had now been with the

company for several years. He was retained, not because of his undisputed ability to curse all others into silence, but because of his great strength and his willingness to use it in his work. As a fellow-workman he was simply tolerated, and no more, and, aside from his work, there was but one other occupation in which he possessed any semblance of authority, and that was at the "ring-side," as it was called, when a dispute, too hot for mere words, was to be settled with the gloves.

The "ring" was nothing else than a space in the warehouse, bordered on four sides with boxes of freight, serving both as a line of demarcation and as seats for the local spectators. These occasional encounters were conducted according to the rules of the dock, which were drawn up with a strong and vigorous sense of justice. Brutality was not permitted in any form; while the man who resorted to meanness, knew only too well that he had better "get his time," or, in other words, give up his job. Turner's stocky frame and sonorous voice were a sufficient recommendation for the position of referee, and he became a sort of a fixture on the job.

One evening during the off-hours when things were unusually quiet, a little gathering of men could be seen over in the corner of the wareroom. They were seated around a broken box, interested in a game of cards in which the stakes were somewhat above the average. They had been playing there for several hours, and Lanning, as usual, was one of the interested number, while for his opponent he had the none too friendly Turner, who from the very start had been a heavy loser, which fact did not add appreciably to the geniality of his sour disposition.

Strange to say, Lanning had phenomenal luck with him

all evening, while his companions were trying their best to break his winning streak, but thus far to no avail. The last hand was dealt with due solemnity, and Turner, who had borrowed from his companions for the fourth or fifth time, now placed his last ten dollars on the table. The usual bids were passed around and accepted or refused, according as each one valued his cards. Jack felt that his hand was worth a larger venture, and again turned to his willing neighbor to request a final loan of twenty-five dollars. Lanning waited for a while until he had studied his cards and believed he could meet his opponent, and did so by contributing his share. On the turn of the cards Ned won, and, with an unconcerned smile, he gathered in his winnings.

The look on his neighbor's face was horrible to see. With an oath, such as he alone could frame, Turner, jumping up from the table, shook his fist in Lanning's face and roared:

"You miserable thief, do you think you can walk away with my money while I have my eyes open? You fixed those cards, you young cheat, and I know it, and the best thing you can do is to shell out right here."

"See here, Turner, I don't like your manner," answered Lanning. "You might let your sentiments out without waking up the city of Brooklyn."

"I want you to know that Jack Turner ain't going to be taken in by any white-faced kid on these workings, 'cause I won't stand for it one minute."

Lanning forced a smile to his face and said: "Say, Jack, I'm not a man looking for trouble; this is the first time I have won at the game in three weeks, and then to have it thrown up to me that I am crooked doesn't

just agree with my system. I'm through playing with you, Turner."

With this he stood up, and, looking the bully squarely in the eye, said: "I'm done with you, Turner; from now on it's going to be business, and that business will begin with the gloves tomorrow night at the sound of the whistle. I'm not accustomed to have people call me pet names and using the hammer at the same time. Jack, you are a big blow and you know it, and your bluff will be called tomorrow night. Mike Toohey will take charge of the arrangements for me."

"Yes, Toohey made your arrangements once before when he shoved you into the office ahead of me, and that I call downright dirty work. After the mill tomorrow night, my boy, you won't be able for anything but the hospital."

Lanning caught these last words as he was just going out the door, and, without further delay, immediately started for home, where he was delighted to see Bob back from his trip.

After supper, while all were seated in the parlor chatting among themselves, the door-bell rang, which Mrs. Mellody immediately answered, and found Father Kennedy, her pastor, standing without. The look of consternation and uneasiness which her face betrayed on seeing him caused the priest to smile. With an exchange of good evenings, she ushered the visitor into the darkened hallway, which was separated from the parlor, where the others sat in expectant silence, by a small curtain which shrunk in apparent disdain from the floor. While the visitor was stooping to remove his rubbers, Mrs. Mellody shoved her hand through a slit in the curtain and stealthily

waved the rest of the family toward the kitchen, a signal that needed no repetition when, after clearing her throat, she uttered the name "Father Kennedy," with more than usual emphasis.

Fearing that the first signal had not cleared the parlor, she again repeated the priest's name by saying: "Why, Father Kennedy, what brought you out this hour of the night? I should think you would be afeared to be out so late. But, sure, Father, we're glad to see you at any time."

"Oh, I just had a sick call over in this section," answered the visitor, "and I happened in to see how the folks were getting on."

"Arrah, Father, we're delighted to see you, but you always manage to find me with my old duds on. Come right into the parlor and take that big rocker there; it's the comfortablest chair in the house, Father! I'll go and call John; I'll be back in a minute." With that she turned toward the dining-room and, when half-way in the door, she lifted her voice as though her John were in the next block and said:

"John, dear, who do you think is here? It's Father Kennedy himself. Come in right away and see him," as if John did not know half an hour ago that the priest was at the front door, through the violent efforts of his good wife to so inform him.

The good people were poor hands at dissimulation, and their actions must not be attributed to hypocrisy, which was so foreign to them. They simply desired to gain a little time in which to make themselves presentable when they came in to visit their beloved pastor. The

reader will no doubt see in their method a striking similarity to the by-play of everyday life.

"You don't tell me, Mary, and it's Father Kennedy himself," answered John from the other room. "Where are my good slippers, could you tell me, Mary? I'll be there this instant, if I can get these old brogans off my feet." The mistress of the house, who expected some such request, with a bow for pardon toward her guest, left the room and went out mumbling in an undertone: "John, as usual. He always wants some one to be waitin' on him."

All in a fluster, she came out and found Bob, Ned and Eileen standing in the corner whispering, with no evident signs of preparation. "For goodness' sake, Eileen, run and get me a clean apron—is my hair all right?" as she bobbed at herself in passing the sideboard. "I'm a show entirely to be opening the door for Father Kennedy. Boys, run and get on your best clothes and come into the parlor. John, will you never get those shoes off? Eileen, what are you standing there for—go and put on your 'good blue'; you look like a scare-crow."

All these orders were issued in a subdued undertone, while poor Father Kennedy was left alone in the parlor, looking over the old family album, which, in many cases, serves as an anchor for all sudden and unexpected guests.

After a minute or so, Mrs. Mellody, decked out in a brand-new apron and an extra bow on her collar, came into the parlor, confident that the almost invisible bow gave her the appearance of being dressed up, while in reality its presence could be discovered only by the owner's fussy solicitude for its more tasteful arrangement.

While she was excusing herself for her delay, John ambled in as if he had run a mile or so in order to get there, puffing away as a result of an heroic effort in removing his boots without his wife's usual help. His hair was newly combed, but his black bow tie disdained to settle in its proper place until his wife discovered it climbing up under his ear and fastened it beneath his chin, informing the visitor that "John will never know how to dress himself properly."

Eileen was the next to put in her appearance in a new gown, looking as clean and fresh as a blossom. Thus, it was some time before all were finally seated in the parlor, while each renovated arrival suddenly seemed to have lost the power of speech, except Mrs. Mellody, who was more than mortified at their silence.

"I see, Mrs. Mellody," Father Kennedy was saying, "that you have a new member attending Mass with you on Sunday."

"Yes, Father, Mr. Lanning, here, is our new boarder, and he goes to church with us now every Sunday. I wanted him to go over and see you some time and have a chat with you, but I am afeared he is a little bashful, as he is not in the country very long.

"Why yes, Mr. Lanning," said the priest, "come over any evening at all; I'll be glad to have you call on me. Bring Bob, here, along with you; I have not seen him of late."

The conversation thus drifted along for a while, until the mother requested her daughter to play a piece on the piano for Father Kennedy. She hesitated a little, but on the visitor's solicitation she began the happy, rollicking tune of "The Kerry Dance," followed by several other old

Irish favorites, while the mother sat looking at the back of Eileen's "good blue," noting how well it fitted her. Old John, as usual, was clearing his throat every now and then, striving to coax an invitation out of some one to ask him to sing "Fogarty's Cake."

While he was rehearsing the verses in his mind, in case of a call, the guest of the evening suddenly arose and announced that he must be on his way, now that Eileen had finished playing. Amid many protestations from all, and a look of injured disappointment from John, who had run over just eleven verses of the favorite ballad in his mind, the priest succeeded in getting hold of his hat and cane, and, renewing his invitation to Ned, took his departure.

As soon as the door closed behind the reverend guest, every one began to talk at once. Hardly had the wife come in from the hallway when John, in a tone of offended pride, said: "Now, why didn't you have me sing 'Fogarty's Cake' for his reverence. I just know he'd like to hear it, and my voice was in grand trim for a good round."

"I know, John, dear, that he would, but I was that muddled that I couldn't think of my own name. And mind you, here is the pocket of my skirt hanging inside out, and look at the shoes on me. It's no wonder the good man was in a hurry to go. And, John, will you never get that tie on right; you were a sight fit to make me cry. Eileen, dear, I like the way your dress sets in the back; sure it's proud I am of my own needlework; and boys, I'm so glad you were looking nice for the priest, who's a good man, God bless him. You must go over and see him soon, Neddy; now won't you? I'd like so much for you to have a good chat with him."

The clock was just striking eleven when all retired to their rooms. The last word from Mrs. Mellody after she had hidden the general purse in the bottom of the wood-box and lowered the lamp for the night, was: "John, wasn't Father Kennedy good, now, not to mention my coming late for Mass that Sunday?"

"I only wish he did," said the husband, "I'd tell him a few more of your thricks. You never want to let on that your husband knows anything, and that's the way with you, Mary."

"Now, John, dear, don't go to sleep mad now. Sure, how did I know that you wanted to sing tonight, and me thinking that you were all tired out after a hard day's work."

CHAPTER VII.

A SINCERE SOCIALIST.

THE NEWS of trouble always travels fast. The outcome of the game between Lanning and Turner was the sole topic amongst the men on the dock, owing to the fact that Turner's ability had never been called into question by anyone heretofore, due, perhaps, to his continual habit of blowing about his prowess. These bouts were not an infrequent occurrence, and were conducted with no attempt at secrecy; but the coming encounter was no ordinary one, because of the popularity of the participants. In this method of settling their quarrels, there was a certain spirit of manliness, especially since it was a most effective means of doing away with factional feeling, leaving the result of all disputes on the shoulders of those seeking trouble. The decision once handed down in that strenuous court of justice, there was no further room for argument.

Ned was not a pugilist in disguise, as a great many of our modern heroes are painted; he was simply an all-around handy fellow, with a wiry constitution, which concealed more energy than appeared on the surface. He was, however, no stranger in the art of self-defense, brought up, as he was, in a land where the youth do not leave their boyish quarrels to be settled by their parents. Lanning did not relish the trouble, which he gladly would

have avoided, but he was determined to face the issue at any cost.

Turner, of course, was going about advertising his ability to all who would listen to him. His blustering and blowing was certainly a dangerous-looking indicator of what was to happen to Ned at the evening's entertainment; but the dog that barks, according to an old saying, is very timid about using his teeth. In reality, the big truck handler was an opponent to be feared because of his well known strength, although he overrated his staying qualities somewhat, and, while possessing the outward appearance of self-confidence, he was the least bit uneasy.

This feeling grew upon him as the hour for trial gradually drew near; so much so, that his big cowardly heart had formed a plan to insure victory. Ned, on the other hand, was not overconfident of the outcome, but he felt that the advice of his friend, Mike Toohey, was not to be disregarded. "Lanning, my boy, that big blow won't last five minutes if you can keep out of his reach for that long. I never saw him in the ring before as long as I have been around here, and I am not far wrong when I say that he is a sorry man that he brought this on himself. If you don't thrash him tonight, by all that's legal I'll give him a taste of my own right handle tomorrow night."

Thanking his friend for his kindly advice, Lanning assured Toohey that he would do his level best to give his man at least as much as he received.

The six o'clock whistle had just finished blowing when the men, without needing an invitation, all rushed to "Number Three," as this particular wareroom was called. In five minutes a good-sized crowd was gathered around the center of attraction, which was lighted up by means

of a discarded locomotive headlight, while the spectators were seated on boxes and everything else available, in the form of a square, with a space in the center free for the referee and the two participants.

Ned felt that he had the good will of the crowd with him, although there was no demonstration one way or the other. Handing his lunch-box to his nearest neighbor, Lanning removed his coat and vest and stood awaiting the arrival of Turner, who was somewhat late.

In a few moments he came in with a dark scowl on his hardened face and began to make his preparations with all the noise possible, mumbling curses and spitting foul tobacco around him. As he stood there in the reflection of the smoky headlight he was seen to be several inches shorter than Lanning in height, but the knotted muscular arms made many of the men fear that Ned would not last long before the ox-like Turner. Bill Lowry, the referee, proceeded to warn the opponents about the rules, and emphatically declared that no mean tactics would be tolerated.

The instructions over, Lanning proffered his hand, as the courtesy of the situation required, but Turner felt just mean enough to refuse to shake hands with his opponent. For a minute or so they both stood on the defensive, each one waiting to see what tactics the other would follow. Lanning's face was slightly pale as he stood before the infuriated longshoreman, whose features betrayed the violence of his anger. Turner immediately began a vicious attack, swinging right and left at Lanning's face. The latter was agile enough to escape the blows of those murderous fists, while the silence was broken only by the

wheezy puffing of Turner, who permitted his anger to get the better of his reason.

Ned at length succeeded in landing a good solid jolt on his adversary's jaw, whose eyes turned green with anger, and, with an oath, the now maddened Turner sprang at his enemy and lodged a glancing blow just over Lanning's eye, whose career would have been brief indeed had he not almost fallen in his attempt to avoid it. Like two fiends they fought all around the enclosed space, lunging and parrying, with teeth set and eyes starting, while the perspiration rolled in large drops from their faces.

From all appearances, the two were well matched, but thus far, the younger man had slightly the better of it. The muscles on Turner's arms stood out in bunches as he crouched before his opponent, but he could not succeed in breaking through Ned's guard, who, now more confident, began to put in some telling blows. This confidence, was Lanning's undoing, however, for Turner, with the lunge of a tiger, dealt him a stunning blow on the chin, and Ned dropped to the floor like a log.

The silence of the crowd was oppressive when they saw him fall under the terrible stroke, while the victor stood there with a leering smile on his hideous face. Lowry began to count off the seconds with a precision that was painful, but he had not gone very far in the count when Lanning managed to get on his feet again, a much wiser and less confident man. His chin was cut where the blow had fallen, and he was dazed somewhat from the effects.

No sooner had he regained his breath, and while all eyes were centered upon him, Lanning shouted to Bill

Lowry, so that all could hear him: "Bill, I want you to examine Turner's gloves. There's something crooked about them."

The referee walked over to Turner and called for his gloves, who, with an oath, refused to take them off. This made Lowry all the more suspicious, and, in no unmistakable tones, he said: "Jack, you know the rules. If you don't hand over those gloves I'll make you do it right here and now, so the sooner the better."

With a grunt of disapproval, he surrendered the gloves and as he did so, Ned shouted: "Look there at his hands, Bill."

Sure enough, on his fingers was a set of brass knuckles, which he was in the act of hiding in his shirt-front. How he succeeded in keeping them on with the gloves no one could tell, but on examining the finger-holes, it was discovered that the separating strips had been cut in order to allow the brass rings to remain on his fingers. When Lowry saw the trick he gave Turner a look that would freeze an ordinary man and said: "Turner, you're a mean scoundrel." Then, turning to the anxious crowd, he explained: "Boys, here's a man who was once a gentleman, but we can no longer look upon him as such, after what he has done tonight. He comes in here amongst us like a common criminal, to commit murder in order to prove he's the better man. These brass knuckles are what Turner needs to make a showing amongst us. I now declare the decision in favor of Lanning, and I ask the penalty for the offender. What shall it be?"

A murmur of scornful derision arose against the culprit, who stood glaring like a caged lion at the now angry crowd, which was hooting and shouting, "To the river

with him; give him the treatment," and various other threats, while many hands were ready to seize him.

Just at this moment Lanning jumped to the top of one of the boxes, and, raising his glove, called for silence. "Men, I think I have the first say. I want you to hold your decision for a moment. Let Turner have the gloves again, and give him another chance. I want you to do me the favor of overlooking his first offense. I'm going to ask him now to give me a show at fair fighting and we'll forget all about this little affair." It was with reluctance that the crowd assented, and the opponents once more stood up for battle.

Turner, now driven to desperation over his discovery, went at Lanning with all the madness of his aroused nature, determined on taking some of the conceit out of his man. Ned, who was rested somewhat during the interval, became as wary and as watchful as his enemy, while they sparred back and forth with all senses keyed to the highest pitch.

Turner was soon puffing again from the effects of his futile blows, when a firm jolt closed one of his eyes. Rushing at Lanning with the fury of a madman he swung half around as he missed his aim. Lanning, in order to change his tactics, began to feign fatigue, and act as if all out of breath, which Turner, noting, proceeded to taunt him about giving up so soon. Confidence now got the better of the big truck-handler, and he became careless in protecting himself. Ned's assumed weakness was apparent to everyone, and to Turner in particular, but in a moment of aroused vigor he let out a vicious right-arm blow, which took his man squarely on the chin and he dropped out of all attempt to continue the

fight any longer. There he lay helpless and exhausted on the floor, while the referee pointed to Lanning as the victor. The cheer that rent that old warehouse was heard for blocks, and the men crowded around Ned, shaking his hand at his double victory.

One of the first to congratulate him was his friend Mike Toohey, who rushed up to him and said, "Lanning, you're a brick. If he had licked you this time I was going to let him have his brass knuckles, and fight him to a finish. Poor Turner won't have a word out of him for the next ten years. That last stroke of yours took all the talk out of him. It's a good lesson for Jack and I think it will make a man of him."

The men all agreed that they had never before seen a better exhibition of skill on the dock than they had just witnessed, and it resulted in the solution of a problem which might have ended seriously for more than one if it were allowed to stand for some time. Lanning had all the help he wanted in dressing, while Turner, who was now fully recovered from his strenuous exercise, came in from the wash-room and, walking up to his opponent, said:

"Well, Lanning, I refused to shake hands with you once tonight, but I am only too glad to do it now. I wasn't myself tonight or I'd never have done the mean trick I was caught at. I ought to lose, but I lost to a good man and Jack Turner is not the one to deny it. From tonight, Lanning, you can bank on me as one of your best pals."

"Thank you, Jack. My victory was simply an accident. I'm sure you would have won at first if you had

left out the knuckles. We won't mention that little affair any more. I had to work hard, but a good friend is worth working for."

Ned walked home with a joyous heart and a sore head, the result of Turner's impressive stroke. On entering the Mellody home he met the mistress at the door, where she had been patiently watching for the straggler, picturing to herself several street-car accidents, with her Ned underneath. The first thing that caught her eye was the cut on his chin, which was slightly covered with blood.

"What ails your chin, Neddy, boy? It's a terrible cut you have there. What on earth happened you? I must send for the doctor this instant."

"Now, Mrs. Mellody, don't do anything of the sort. I'm all right. I just ran my face against something before I came home and my chin was too soft to stand the pressure. It's only a scratch, anyway."

"A scratch, is it? Don't I see it with my own eyes? You'll have to go to bed right after supper. I'll make a little ginger tea for you—hush, now, don't talk too much, you'll keep the wound open. Let me get a doctor for you, do."

"The doctor be hanged, mother; you're as good as any doctor, so don't bother your head."

He was glad to sit down to a good warm supper while Mrs. Mellody left him for a few moments. Eileen, who had been on an errand, came in just then, and of course he was obliged once more to evade the real story of his injury.

The two were talking away at the table when the self-appointed doctor came in from the kitchen with what

looked to Lanning like a small-sized table-cloth. It contained a bread-poultice large enough to cover all the chins in the house. Without a word she bundled him up in a jiffy, appropriating with her crude application nearly all the territory of his countenance, except his eyes. During the operation the patient could scarcely choke down a rising laugh, but sat helplessly while the weighty poultice was firmly hitched. When the task was completed to the scrupulous satisfaction of Mrs. Mellody, the prisoner made a grimace at Eileen, who, not proof against a joke, burst into a tittering laugh, at which her mother, who had not seen Ned's action, frowned at her daughter and said:

"Have you no feeling at all, child? Don't you see the poor boy is hurt? I'll send you to bed this instant if you don't behave." Eileen succeeded in assuming a countenance in keeping with the gravity of the situation, until the culprit relieved her of any further responsibility by retiring to his room, where, after carefully locking his door, he quietly proceeded to extract his person from the cumbersome poultice and in no gentle manner deposited it in the farthest corner.

In the morning the good woman came to his door with some beef-broth, mutton-tallow and a few more infallible concoctions for the injured patient, who, on hearing her ascending the stairs, made a hasty dash for the discarded bandage of the previous night. The repeated rapping made him dress rather hurriedly, after which he succeeded in partially replacing the poultice in its proper location. On opening the door he uttered a muffled "Good morning," and in doing so dislodged the precious bandage from his chin.

"Good morning, Ned," began the good woman, as she deposited her mysterious medicines on the table. "It's very few that are able to make a poultice that will stay on all night. Sure my own mother was the only one in the county Tipperary who could make an all-night poultice, and I learned it from her. It fell off just in time, as I have a fresh one right here with me."

Try as he would, Lanning did not escape the fresh application, which he permitted to remain in its place until he was a block from the house on his way to work.

The morning was bright and cheerful when, after the victory of the evening before, Ned entered the dock-office where he was driven into a corner, while congratulations were showered upon him by his fellow-clerks. The course of the former artist was from that day on very smooth indeed, with his previous enemies more than deferential to him, valuing his opinions a little more highly. Turner tamed down considerably, and yet, there was something manly about the poor fellow in the manner in which he acknowledged his defeat and expressed his friendship for Ned.

Our hero's propensity for gambling was as strong as ever, losing oftener than winning. His losses were carelessly overlooked when an unusually lucky sitting brought in large profits, thus in his own mind wiping out the shortage of former games. Such was the state of affairs when he was passing the bank one evening, and something impelled him to go in and investigate the condition of his account. He could hardly believe the clerk when told that he had about one-fourth of his original deposit. His gambling expenses had grown enormously, while on the other hand he fostered an exaggerated idea

of his stolen fortune. It was somewhat of a surprise to him to be informed that he had been drawing on his account at the rate of over three hundred dollars a month during the last eleven months. The horror of the figure made him turn slightly pale.

The same evening, after he had eaten his supper, he sat beside the stove, talking to Eileen.

"What do you think of gambling, Eileen?" Lanning was asking as he glanced over the top of the evening paper. "Do you think it wrong when a man can meet his debts?"

"What do I think of gambling, Mr. Lanning? Why, I have never given it a thought except once, and that was when our store manager's son shot himself after he had gambled away the last meal of his wife and children. We all felt simply terrible for Mr. Cecil, his father, who had planned so many great things for his boy. Since that time I have not given the question another thought, only I feel that it is very wrong to gamble."

"Well, Eileen, the reason I asked you is because a very dear friend of mine has been in the habit of gambling, and I could not make him believe it was wrong, because he has no one to depend on him."

"Mr. Lanning, I would never marry or even care to know a man who gambles. The husband who can deprive his wife and children of a decent home, and take even the last crust of bread out of their mouths to pay what he calls his honest gambling debts is, in my estimation, nothing more or less than the vilest kind of a thief. A thief, as we understand him, will steal from others to give to his own; while the gambler will steal from his own to give to others. I need not ask you which is to

be more despised. As for the young man who justifies his action because he has no one to work for or support, he can scarcely have any manhood or ambition in him. He is a burden on society, and since he has no family to steal from, he must in time steal from others, and thus become a thief in the proper meaning of the word."

"Eileen," said Lanning, uneasy at the frequent mention of the word thief, "I never knew you to be possessed of such serious thought. Your explanation makes it perfectly clear to me that a gambler and a thief are one and the same in your mind. I will warn my friend and give him your legal opinion on the matter, and perhaps it will help to make him a better man."

"I would not want you to tell your friend any such thing about me, Mr. Lanning; I merely gave you my opinion in confidence. If your friend knew that I called him a thief he would not relish it very much. You may use it as your own opinion, if you like, but please do not mention my name."

"Very well, Eileen, I won't tell him you said it, but he will know right away that I never had brains enough to think that all out. I'm sure it will do him a lot of good to hear how wrong it is to be a gambler."

The subject was never again broached between them. Ned, who valued the girl's esteem very highly, retired to his room still wincing under her unvarnished declaration. There was a new motive for his reform besides the remembrance of a nearly depleted bank account. On the other hand, Eileen had her conjectures concerning Lanning's absence from home nearly every evening after supper, during the past two months. Mrs.

Mellody also had thoughts of her own about his frequent absence, and expressed as much to her husband when she said:

"John, dear, do you know that Mr. Lanning does not seem to care for staying at home as much as he used to. There is something on his mind that must be bothering him, and I often wonder if he has begun to dislike his boarding place. Now, Bobby, when he gets home, never wants to go out at all, but I suppose it is because the poor fellow is away so much that he would like to stay home for good. And John, do you know, I have a queer feeling every time I think of Bobby; I'm afeard that something will happen to him whenever I see him going on the road."

"Mary, will you never get over thinking terrible things? You are just as creepy as you always were; like the time you were sure that your beloved John was not going to be a saint, just because your wedding-veil came off on the way to the church the day we were to be married. If your parsnips don't grow in the garden, or you get a letter on a Friday, and a lot more such nonsense, you're sure something is going to happen, and that's the way you've been these twenty-one years back now, and that's as long as I've known you. With all your 'banchees' and sure signs, nothing has happened yet except that you were pretty lucky to get acquainted with John Patrick Mellody. You're always with your head up in the air, looking for the sun-dogs of bad weather, while the good Lord is doing all He can to give us a life of sunshine. I'm thinking you haven't a whole lot of common sense after all."

"Och will you whisht, John? Don't be scolding me as if you had all the common sense in this house. If John Patrick thinks for one instant that he was conferring a favor on Mary Elizabeth Ryan, he was badly mistaken. And besides—Oh, but sure what's the use a-talking? I know you don't mean the half of it. You only wanted to pester me, but I'm too cute for you. Tell me, now, what you think of Mr. Lanning."

"Well, Mary, he does sthrike me as sort of queer. The only thing he liked to talk about for the last few months is about th' injustice of this and that, and the laborer, and the rich man, and everything else under the sun. I do believe he's gone and joined that crowd of grumblers down on Market street who call themselves socialists."

"And what is a socialist, John?" asked his wife.

"A socialist, Mary, is a person who, like yourself, is always looking for trouble, and when he can't find it, he makes it. He's a man who always wants his breakfast in bed—in fact, he would like to have some one eat it for him if it would do himself any good, so he could roll over and spend the rest of his life in lazy contentment, watching others do the work for him. We all like to have others do our work for us, but since we can't find anyone 'omathan' enough to do it we must do the next best thing and handle the shovel ourselves."

"Arrah, poor Mr. Lanning needs my sympathy all the more since he has the same fine qualities as your beloved wife. Thank goodness, I have no corn on my foot to be always holding out so people could step on it in order to have an excuse to show my bad nature. My dear John,

if I had a corn I would not make every one in the block suffer for it, and, besides, I'd wait many a day if I waited for you to do my work—take that, now."

"There, there, Mary, I don't mean a word I say. I just thought I could get you riled. You're the best woman in the world, and you're not a socialist at all. If there is one thing I am sorry for all the days since I married you, it is that I didn't see all your fine qualities sooner."

"Well, John, dear, your heart is not half bad, but your tongue goes on a ramble sometimes. You are a good John even though your poor corn makes me vexed now and then." With that she walked over to where her husband sat and placed her arms affectionately around his neck.

The conversation was dropped here as Lanning was heard coming in earlier than usual. He went directly to his room, where he settled down for an evening with his books. His reading was, like his disposition, of a somewhat serious turn, with history and politics as his favorite subjects. Whatever influence had come upon him, Ned found his way into the ranks of Socialism, in which he became more than an idle partisan. For months he studied earnestly, striving to obtain a clear notion of the fundamental ideas of the question, but in spite of his researches he could find only one thing that was any way tangible—the abuses existing in the present state of affairs. He had arrived at the same conclusion, for the discovery of which the socialists claim all the credit, while as a matter of fact, abuse has been an inseparable defect in all human institutions.

The Market Street hall was the gathering place for a crowd of New York agitators, and it was there they conducted all those solemn meetings which aimed at the establishment of a system, remarkable in great part as much for its lack of reason as for its selfish and daring demands. Let a man not leave his common sense in the check-room when he enters one of those meetings, and he will be amazed at seeing so many apparently intelligent and well-meaning men remaining long enough to give these visionaries a second thought.

The popularity of the cause is founded on one of the frailties of human nature, the capital sin of covetousness. There is no man more to be feared than the one who goes about scattering the seeds of discontent, and, strange to say, there is no man who commands more willing attention from many so-called men of intelligence than the grumbler. Why, we do not know, but it is a fact worth noting. The number of victims of this social disease, from the hovel of the pauper to the throne of the king, is enormous. It is easy, but not always prudent, to tell a man how poorly he looks; but it is the man who can cure whom we want, and not the man who sells troublesome thought at the lowest possible price.

The knowledge of existing evils has a fascination in itself, and has led many a wise man to confound the disease with the remedy. A man may discover existing social evils without knowing enough about law to keep him out of jail; but it does not follow that he is capable of framing a new and satisfactory system of government. The socialist's belief in the infallibility of the cure he offers, or at least his pretended belief in it,

gives the general public all the more reason to submit it to a very close investigation before accepting it.

Lanning was one of the many men whose ideas, religious and social, were well suited to the swallowing of such Eutopian promises as are held out by the wary socialist. It is remarkable what a virtuous spirit of charity towards their fellow beings has suddenly taken hold of these learned men who reject not only the law of man, but also the law of God. Forgetting that they do not possess a monopoly of that very essential requisite called talent, they continually bemoan their state, because they cannot be as financially successful as the more fortunate ones.

The new recruit put his heart and soul into the movement, simply because the microbe of discontent had entered his blood, and this in a land which is so conducive to its development, owing to the fact, that the word liberty is very often confounded with license. So far had Lanning progressed in the good graces of the Market Street crowd that he was included amongst the orators of the cause, in favor of which he had already given several public addresses. The vehemence of his utterances and his fair talent for oratory made him quite a popular member, and in time he became a good drawing card on the handbills. Such was the method of the powers behind the throne, selecting some tolerably well-educated young fellow who could speak to a crowd without getting stage fright, and then giving him a chance to find out that he has some latent talent for public speaking, while they furnish the ranting and the audience.

This eagerness to secure oratorical talent caused them to overlook the necessity of preserving the unity

of doctrine, so that we have today as many kinds of socialists as there are fish in the ocean. I defy any man to go out amongst these so-called government saviours and secure a comprehensive idea of the meaning of Socialism. The only one point of general agreement is a marked dissatisfaction with everything in particular, and in this nearly every one outside of heaven is more or less a socialist, because we have a higher destiny than the present imperfect state, and that in God Who is eternal satisfaction.

Lanning's mind was still sound enough to recognize some things in the movement which did not aim entirely at social welfare, but as many others before him, he let those apparently insignificant things slip by without sifting them. It remained for these same little things to come into prominence on a future occasion, and it was only then that he began to give them the necessary consideration.

Our young friend of the brush had been in the country just about two years, and the flattery of his socialistic companions made him overlook his presumption in getting up to teach the people how the country should be governed. Thus has this great liberty-loving country given shelter to many European malcontents, who, not successful in disturbing the peace abroad, come over here to shout for freedom of speech and liberty of action before they are well off the steamer that brings them.

One evening more than usual interest was aroused down on Market Street, when the hall was crowded to the doors by a large number of men to hear one of the national advocates of the cause. The time for the fall election was fast approaching, and of course the best oratorical talent was sent out to win over the labor vote.

The audience gathered long before the appointed hour, while Lanning sat on the platform with the reception committee, of which the speaker of the evening was the center.

To an ordinary observer, the man's hands did not betray any sign of being disfigured by overindulgence in hard work, nor were the furrows of worry noticeable to any extent on his forehead.

There are many of these agitators going about with their pessimistic views of injustice and poverty, while in private life these sham toilers are living in practical luxury on the funds that should go to the wives and children of those who contribute to the music of Socialism. Such is the irony of the situation that it is deplorable to find so many good people led astray by these shrewd agitators.

The orator of the evening was no every-day socialist, as his hearers soon discovered before he had progressed very far in his speech.

"Brothers and friends, we are here tonight to declare our undying fidelity to a cause in which some of the brightest intellects of the day are interested. I have the honor of standing here as the representative of the poor man and the laborer, and my aim is to help him secure the value of his hire. (Applause.) We are living in a country which boasts of her liberty and a square deal, deluding honest men with her promises of equal justice and liberty of speech, while at the same time she sits idly at the festive board of wealth, swallowing the honied flattery they dole out to her; robbing her in the meantime of her most precious treasures before her very eyes.

"Her industries are in the hands of men whose honesty is lost in their money bags. The authority which

rules over us today is for the taming and the robbing of you laboring men, and for the financial profit of the already overfed rich.

"Things are not going to be always thus. The day will soon dawn when we will come into our own, and we shall hasten that coming only by defeating them at the polls. Are we going to stand by like frightened slaves, and let them shackle us to their gilded chariots, or rather are we going to let them know that we are men and citizens, who have every right to the fruits of the land?

"Authority! What do we care for authority as it is wielded by those decorated puppets of wealth, whose every act is prompted by a greed for gold. We want justice, and we'll have that justice if you, my brothers, will only stand shoulder to shoulder under the banner of Socialism. Then the treasury of the land will be open, not for the brazen usurper on the throne, but for you toilers, who are now struggling in the talons of those thieving vultures. Let us shake off the fetters of capitalism; let us snatch from its bloated hands the bread of the widow and the orphan and take to ourselves the right that is due free-born men." (Here he went on with a terrible scoring of the wealthy in general, artfully omitting whatever might redound to their credit.)

"How are we to attain success? How shall we force them to listen to us? I'll tell you. It is by union, and by nothing else but union. We must unite in one intelligent body of citizens, and we must prepare for that union by refusing any longer to offer a blind obedience to all authority, and by authority I mean both civil and religious. A man who is tied hand and foot by his priest or minister cannot have his eyes open to reason; Social-

ism can never blossom in the poisonous atmosphere of superstition. Free yourselves from the tyranny of church and state, and be men. Any man who would become a true American citizen must first give up the follies of religion. There is no God, he is merely a——"

Thus did the rabid speaker go on with a most bitter denunication of everybody and everything not connected with the cause of Socialism; dealing out his sour scurrility to those horny-handed sons of toil whose lives are so much in need of the sunshine of God's religion. As he stood there he was more of a tyrant than ever sat upon a throne, driving out from the lives of some of his hearers the little sweetness they derived from Christianity; opening the wounds of life once more, to leave them festering in the sordid atmosphere of Socialism.

The wonder is that such arch-fiends of Satan are permitted to run at large throughout the land, scattering the seeds of atheism and social unrest in the American home. The family, therefore, became the next target of the speaker's attack. Consistent as he was, he soon succeeded in undermining the very fortress of our social life, advocating a liberty and freedom of love which must, in a short time, destroy the bulwarks which separate the nation from ruin.

If there is one thing for which the orator must be given credit, it should be for his candor. Would that there were a few more such truthful socialists and we need never fear for the safety of the country, because candor is just one thing for which the modern socialist is not particularly noted. A rank atheist himself, the speaker could not resist the opportunity to vomit his vile sputum upon everything of a religious nature. His zeal

for making an impression upon the large gathering before him led him to say a little more than he intended, with the result that an entirely new phase of the question was submitted for their consideration. From the applause, which had become more infrequent as he progressed, it was evident that those in the audience were becoming more reserved in their judgment.

The action of the man in taking up the question of religion was an unusual one. As a rule, these shrewd agitators cautiously avoid it entirely, knowing full well that the time is not yet ripe for revealing their sentiments in this regard, contenting themselves, at least in their oratorical campaigns, with a discussion of civic matters only. It is only once in a while that the outer veneer is removed to expose, under the guise of the socialist, the grinning mocker of Christ and His church.

If the voter will only examine the long list of promises offered as bait by the socialistic press, he will see that it resembles some of our present-day mining-investment "ads," offering to sell a fictitious mine of gold for the small sum of ten cents a share. The promises of Socialism are just about as fictitious. Let the man who values his immortal soul take the trouble to scratch the socialist and he will generally find the atheist, who, denying all authority, must eventually deny the very existence of God. The misery of the situation lies in the fact that there is no class so willing to deny one another's assertions, especially when they realize that a certain speaker has been a little premature in his declarations. The sooner people come to know how Socialism and religion agree, the sooner will the country be rid of its new cancerous growth.

The state of mind of many of the Market Street adherents, after the tirade of the earnest speaker, was anything but settled. Ned Lanning suddenly became a wiser and more doubtful socialist, and, as a result, fully determined to find out the real attitude of the church towards the question. Father Kennedy's invitation immediately came into his mind, and accordingly, the following evening after work, he donned his best suit and informed Mrs. Mellody of his intention to call on the priest that very night.

"I'm awful glad that you are, Neddy. Since you gave up going to church with us over two months ago I couldn't sleep nights for worry over your poor soul."

"Well, mother, you have a poor opinion of your star boarder. Some day you may be sorry for all the bad things you think about me and my religion."

"But you know, Neddy, I'm only wanting to see you good, and that's why I do not like to see you out with them what-you-may-call-'ems every night. I know you won't be vexed with me, but I asked the priest to have a word with you about going to church, and it's glad I am to have you call on him."

"I know, mother, you are always trying your best to make me good, and I am an ungrateful wretch not to appreciate it."

Lanning went out with a "God bless you" from the good woman and started directly for the priest's house, where he met Father Kennedy just coming in from a sick-call. Ned wanted to defer his visit to another time, but the good priest would not listen to any such thing and led him by the arm into his study.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE QUESTION.

"I AM DELIGHTED to be the recipient of this call, Mr. Lanning," said Father Kennedy as soon as they were seated in the library. "It seems to me that you keep yourself in seclusion too much."

"Well, Father," answered Lanning, "I can scarcely give you a good reason for my delay in accepting your kind invitation. I suppose I can do no better than acknowledge the reputation I have of being a poor neighbor."

"I am always at home," answered the priest, "or at least I try to be, to all the young men of my parish. It seems that they have put me down as a busy old crank, to be seen with most pleasure at a distance. I really wish I could devise some scheme to let them know that I am not living in a spiritual fortress. If my old clock did not play havoc with the twelve hours of the day I could give them a little more attention and become better acquainted with them."

"I am sure, Father, that you must have your hands full with such a large parish. I cannot see how you manage as well as you do. There is no doubt that we young fellows need some one to call us to time every now and then. We get a kind of an idea that we know it all, until we find ourselves in a tight corner, as I am at pres-

ent. I have been a little backward in my religious affairs, I must acknowledge, but I have been trying to make up for it in another way. In other words, I have for some time been working for the cause of Socialism, and I have worked hard. I know not what your opinion on the question may be, Father, but I came over here tonight to ask you to help me to a better understanding by explaining the relation of the question to religion. For a long time I have been under the impression that Socialism was confined to civic matters only, and that it interfered in no way with religion; but not long ago I heard a renowned speaker of ours utter some remarks which did not sound as though a socialist could have much love for religion. Now, Father, I would like very much to hear the other side of the question, if you will do me that kindness."

While Lanning was speaking, Father Kennedy's eyes opened wider and wider at the innocent admission of his young friend. The remembrance of his caller's religious convictions, however, soon brought the priest to his senses, and with no feigned surprise he answered: "Mr. Lanning, I need not tell you that I am somewhat surprised to find you in the ranks of Socialism. However, I do not doubt that you have been sincere in your attachment to it, as is now evident from your desire to hear both sides of the question. I may not be an authority for everything the socialists teach, but I will tell you that from what I do know of the question, Socialism is wrong in many of its fundamental principles. The subject is a broad one, indeed, and I would not attempt to open the argument from an economic standpoint; therefore I will endeavor to confine myself to the religious phase only."

"But pardon me, Father," interrupted Ned, "you say that we are wrong in many of our fundamental principles; now, with regard to labor. Do you think that we are wrong in standing as the advocates of the poor laborer? Is it not evident to any man who will open his eyes, that the laborer is not getting just the right kind of a deal? The army of idle men willing to work is becoming larger and larger every day, and it is for the betterment of these destitutes that we are working, and I don't see where religion and marriage have anything to do with the question."

"My boy, you are starting at the wrong end of the socialistic argument. If I wanted to assure you that this building in which I am living is a solid structure, and that there is no danger of it falling on our heads, I would begin by showing you the foundation of it. Now, in examining the modern structure called Socialism, the same procedure would be most in accordance with reasonable inquiry. Of what, then, is the foundation made, or, in other words, what are the religious convictions of the leading socialists?

"Bax, a man of the highest standing in your ranks, tells us that Socialism advocates an 'ethical, religious and political revolution as a consequence of the economic one.' As to this gentleman's opinion on marriage, I am not positive. If you will pardon me one moment I can find a book of his in the case here."

After a brief search the priest returned to his chair with the book in his hand. "Yes, here we have it in his own words. The title of this work is "Outlook from the New Standpoint," and on page one hundred and sixty he says: 'Meanwhile, we ought to combat by every means within

our power the metaphysical dogma of the inherent sanctity of the monogamic principle.' If that does not aim at the present form of marriage, then I will join your ranks. So much for the question of marriage.

"I have still another socialistic friend in my library," continued the priest, as he once more turned to his shelves. This man, if I do not mistake, enjoys the confidence of every true socialist. As he came back with a book in his hands he continued: "I trust, Mr. Lanning that you will not repudiate the statements of Mr. Marx, a man for whom all real socialists have a paternal regard. Let us listen to what he has to say on religion: 'Man makes religion, not religion man. The abolition of religion as the deceptive happiness of the people is a necessary condition for their true happiness.' Now it is very evident from the assertions of these two socialistic lights that religion and marriage are not on the best of terms with Socialism, say what you will to the contrary."

"Those men, Father, are out of date," interrupted Lanning; "they were writing for their own day. However, I must admit that I never had an opportunity to read many of those authors. The socialist today, as I understand him, does not want to interfere with religion; he desires to leave it alone entirely, although the fellow I heard in our hall not long ago said some pretty hard things against the church."

"Mr. Lanning, if, as you say, Marx, Bax, and Engels, the original socialists, are out of date, pray tell me what is left to guide the honest enquirer into Socialism today? Absolutely nothing. Every socialist we meet nowadays is his own walking bible. Socialism itself reminds me

of a large patent-medicine shop, in which one will find a plaster and pill to suit every possible disease in the calendar, while around the shelves of this 'cure-all' institution are concoctions of socialistic theories which are warranted to suit any customer, be he Christian or atheist, Catholic or Protestant. The very fact that the cure you propose is a panacea for all ills, in my mind would make the movement look very suspicious; to be accepted after the closest investigation, and then only when it has proved its claims.

"Let us suppose, for instance, that I were an entire stranger to you and were to call at your door some day and say: 'My dear sir, I am a representative of Socialism in the medical line, and I am here to make you a better and healthier man physically. Before I can do this, however, I find it necessary to remove your head from your body,—now do not be frightened, as I will promise to restore it to you in a more perfect condition, which will permit you to have perfect health as long as you live.' I am sure, Mr. Lanning, that you would eagerly submit. Why, the first thing you would do would be to call for an officer to have him take charge of the escaped lunatic. Now, my boy, that is just what you socialists are proposing to us. You want to dissect our entire civic body and take the very heart out of our present system, and what guarantee have we that you will keep, or even be able to keep, your word? Some of you desire to deprive us of our heads whether we will or no."

"Father, I see the point you wish to make, but I must disagree with your last statement, that the socialist advocates the use of violence. I do not think it fair to call us anarchists. I venture to say that even those old writers

will not support you in your assertion. You must pardon my manner, Father, but you do not know how anxious I am to arrive at the truth."

"Earnestness is just what I desire to see, Mr. Lanning, as it gives me a stronger motive to endeavor to enlighten you. In reference to the remark I just made that the socialist lays himself open to the accusation of being an anarchist, I will appeal to our mutual friend, Karl Marx. Let me see." Here Father Kennedy spent a few moments in turning over the leaves of a pamphlet which he took from the shelf. "Ah, here I have it. In the year 1872 Mr. Marx, in presence of the Hague Congress (I will quote his own words, mind you) declared: 'In most countries of Europe violence must be the lever of our social reform.' If that does not sound like bomb-throwing I would like to know the meaning of anarchy. Well, for the sake of good feeling I will not call the socialists anarchists."

"I guess, Father, you've put another reef in my sail, as we say on the dock; but as I stated once before, is it not a fact that the laboring man is not getting the value of his hire? Too much of the cream is flowing into the pitcher of the already bloated capitalist. The man with the shovel and the large family is permitted only to exist, while he must be satisfied with the crumbs that fall from the table of the over-fed rich. Now, we socialists want to help the laboring slave and give him a man's chance, and you must agree with us in that."

At this juncture the housekeeper, after rapping appeared at the door and said: "Father, there's a man downstairs who wants to see you. Shall I tell him that you are busy?"

"No, Susan, I'll be down immediately." Then turning to Ned he continued, "You will excuse me, please, just for a moment, Mr. Lanning."

"Certainly, Father," put in the young socialist, who accepted the evening paper which the priest held out to him.

After about ten minutes' absence, Father Kennedy returned to the library and laughingly remarked: "It's a strange country, indeed. Just now I was talking with the one man who can nearly always convince me that I am still young, and he's an insurance agent." Then in a more serious mood he added: "Would that I, an old, experienced agent of the house of God, could so convince men of the necessity of preparing for the eternal future.

"But, to return to our discussion. What were we talking about? Oh, yes, it was about the condition of the 'laboring slave,' as you called him. My boy, there is more truth than fiction in what you have said. We do not believe in slave-labor any more than you do, neither are we advocates of the sweat-shop or of child-labor. The Catholic church takes second place to no other institution in the world as the friend of the downtrodden poor. She may not have her charitable deeds advertised in the secular press; she may not have her gifts in times of national calamity acknowledged by kings or worldly rulers, but her maternal hand is never closed to the appeal of poverty or suffering, for she stands in the front rank of the rescuers and cheerful givers.

"Socialism has asked, 'Why, then, does she not come out with us to help save the laborer from the chains of capital? Why does she not join hands with us and fight the battle of the poor?'

"Mr. Lanning, when Socialism washes its doctrines in the spring of divine truth; when it proclaims the unchangeable law of God, when it ceases to oppose the religion founded by Christ, and the guardian of that religion, the Catholic church, then Socialism will have no question to ask. When the shackles of pagan slavery were rotting on the feet of woman; when she was held in no higher estimation than a piece of common property, as Socialism would have her today, whose was the hand that lifted her from the dust and placed her in her proper position? It was the Catholic church, the church of Christ, that freed this slave—the wife and helpmate of the laborer. Today it makes her sad to see the children of that woman striving to put their mother back into the very same shackles of slavery. Do you ask, then, why the Catholic church does not join hands with Socialism?

"Do you think for one moment that she could stand by without protest and see the holy sacrament of Matrimony as Christ instituted it, bartered in exchange for the dreams of Socialism? No, she would not, even though the fight would cost her the last drop of blood. There is no socialistic bribe large enough to influence her to sell the honor of woman or of the family over which she stands guard. As Christ rejected the offer of the devil in exchange for an act of adoration, so will the church refuse to sell the honor of the mother and the child, even if Socialism or any other 'ism' were to pile the crowns of the world as high as the pyramids of Egypt and offer them in exchange."

"Father," interrupted Lanning, as the priest paused for breath, "I must admire your earnestness. I will say, though, that the most of us do not agree with the ex-

tremists on the question of religion and the family. There are a few idiotic shouters who do not understand the real question of Socialism; who rant against religion in general and the Catholic church in particular, but we do not agree with their sentiments, even though you quote Marx to support their cry."

"My young friend, I am very much afraid you are laying yourself open to the accusation of not being a good socialist, when you throw such men as Marx, Engels, Bax, Carpenter, Ferri and Bebel out the window. You have been sailing in the ship of Socialism, the hull of which is made up of those sturdy planks, and once you tear those planks out of the shaky vessel, down you go to the bottom, a miserable wreck.

"Let me tell you, Mr. Lanning, the sooner Socialism sees the necessity of becoming a unit, the sooner will we come to a clearer understanding of the question. In my mind, there is no class of men today who have made so much use of the expression, 'I deny,' than the socialists. It does not require an abnormal intellect to deny; it is not the man who is everlastingly pulling things down that we want; it is the builder, it is the man who says, 'This is my doctrine and I am ready to prove it in the face of the whole world.' If you unblushingly throw the fathers of Socialism out of your hall, out of self-respect you must change both your doctrine and your name. On the other hand, if you hide under the mantle of these same writers, extol them and quote them in support of your doctrinal wares, there is only one thing left for you to do.

"Come out honestly and squarely and tell the laborer in plain every-day language what you are going to give him in exchange for his vote. Tell him that he must ex-

pect to have his family affairs placed entirely in your hands; tell him that his wife and his mother must become common property. Tell him that your Mr. Engels says that 'Three great obstacles block the path of social reform—private property, religion and the present form of marriage.'

"Talk to the laborer whom you love so much, talk to him in a language that he will understand. Do not talk to him as Bax does about the 'monogamic principle.' He will not know whether it is a new breakfast food or the name of a railroad, simply because he does not carry a dictionary in his lunch-box, and in many cases he would not use it even if he had it there. Tell him that under your flag he will be able to raise a mortgage, not only on his house, but also on his wife and children. Tell him that as a socialist he will be able to change his religion as he does his coat, and that the state will help him to do so, asking in return only the small gift of his immortal soul. If you would be a real socialist, a staunch follower of the men who deserve a certain portion of my regard, because they had the courage to put their doctrines down in black and white, which doctrines I have quoted for you, then I say, tell the poor laborer all these things and see whether or not he will barter his vote for socialistic junk."

As he finished speaking, the priest halted in front of his young friend and said: "Mr. Lanning, what a selfish old man I am! Here I have been talking ever since you came in, and I did not have courtesy enough to offer you a cigar. I myself do not smoke, but I always keep some cigars in the house for my guests." As he said this he opened the drawer of his desk and extracted a box containing one of the popular brands. "I hope you will par-

don my forgetfulness, Mr. Lanning," as he passed the box across the table. "Now please do not look at your watch on my account, unless perhaps I am detaining you too long."

"Thank you, Father," answered Lanning, as he accepted one of the proffered cigars. "I was afraid that I was taking up too much of your time. The hour is growing rather late."

"I am only too delighted to have you here tonight," continued Father Kennedy, "especially under the circumstances. I do not desire that you should leave this house until we can come to some understanding of the question at issue. If there is the least doubt in your mind as to the correctness of my views, I will think it only a favor if you question me. I would like to reach every man in the city and tell him just what I am telling you. As an individual I have not the least enmity for the socialist who is sincere in his motive. It is with the doctrine of the cause that I disagree. There are good and bad members in every fold. The Catholic church is not made up entirely of saints."

"From your way of thinking, Father, I would conclude that a Catholic cannot be a socialist," said the visitor, while he removed the tip from his cigar.

"Nothing, Mr. Lanning, can be more evident if Marx and Engels and the others are socialists, and in that I am sure we agree, then I say positively and without qualification that a Catholic cannot be a socialist. The very idea of a Catholic socialist is absurd. Show me the man who claims that title and I will show you either a man who is fit for uniformed attendants or a man who is a hypocrite. I dare say that you will find some politicians

who, looking for the vote of Catholic citizens, will boldly announce their allegiance to anything and everything that will put them into office. It is an insult to every sane voter in the land to hear these political geysers spout about their claims to the kingdom of heaven, at the same time that they are begging for a soft seat on the stage of this life. We want men with convictions, and not weather-cocks that will turn with every change of the breeze. If you can prove to me that a Catholic can deny his Creator, sell his wife and children into social bondage, advocate the overthrow of all authority, and, finally, remove the rock of holy Matrimony from the foundation of the church which Christ has instituted, then I will admit that a Catholic can become a socialist."

"Aside from the question of religion, Father," interposed Lanning, "must you not give us credit for our stand as the friend of the laboring man? We are trying to do the best we can to relieve the misery and poverty of the present-day working class. Is it not a work of charity and brotherly love that we desire to perform?"

"My young friend, you can put me down on your list as a brother of the cause, only while you are doing that work, provided, however, that you confine your attention to a reformation which is in accordance with the law of God. There is only one condition on which I will accompany you in that work, and that is that you do not march under the banner of Socialism. I do not like the trade-mark on it. If it is charity and mercy you are going to preach as we go along, why not unite our efforts with an institution which has been preaching and practicing these virtues for the last nineteen hundred years—the Catholic church?

"Now, on the other hand, I would remind you of a fact which it may be well to mention. The socialist did not always pat the laboring man on the back, if I remember rightly. There was a time when the laborer and the socialist were not the two safest men in the world to entrust to the running of a shaky rowboat. One day not long ago Mr. Socialist rapped on the door of the labor organization and demanded full control of its affairs. Naturally the demand was refused, with the result that there arose a socialistic howl which did not sound much like flattery for the man with the shovel. The first thing Mr. Socialist did when he found that the door would not open to his royal summons was to try to force it open with the crow-bar called 'The Central Federation of Labor,' an organization with socialists occupying the reserved seats of office.

"If the music of Socialism, Mr. Lanning, sounds sweet to the ear of the laboring man, I can attribute it only to the fact that his ear is bad when it comes to music. It looks to me as though the man with the shovel deserves more sympathy nowadays, not so much because of labor conditions, but on account of the wary individual who is going about posing as his friend. For the sake of not being too incredulous, we will not depend too much on that incident to force us to reject the socialists' feeling of friendship."

"It is too bad, Father," answered Ned, flicking the ash from his cigar, "that something cannot be done to change the wage scale; to give the poor more of a show for a respectable living. I tell you it is pretty hard for many of the fellows right here in New York. As soon as sickness knocks on the door and the doctor bills begin to pile

up, the size of the loaf of bread must decrease. You know yourself the wage here in America is not adequate."

"There is no one who knows the condition of the people better than the priest," asserted Father Kennedy. "I have been working in the vineyard of the Lord now for about thirty years, and during that time I have seen every corner of the poor man's hovel. I do not believe there is any man who can come along and tell me of any conditions worse than those I have seen. Would to God that I had the riches of Solomon, and I would use them to brighten the home of the poor and unfortunate. However, you spoke of the inadequacy of our American wage, and in that I do not entirely agree with you.

"A fact is always a good thing to have on hand. It is only reasonable for us to conclude that where we find the largest number of bees, there we will find the most honey. I do not think that it is the beauty of the scenery, nor the desire to travel, that brings nearly a million people every year into our American garden. If the wage here is so terribly unjust, then I cannot see what influence over here could sap the countries of Europe of their inhabitants. Not only do these children of toil earn enough for themselves, but they are able and do support entire families, left after them in the fatherland, and all on this American wage which we call unjust. Millions of dollars are sent back to Europe every year, indicating a healthy surplus coming from the generosity of the American wage.

"Now, viewing these facts as they stand, I do not feel that I could agree with you entirely as to the injustice of our American wage. God knows there are too many poor people among us; too many cases of pitiable destitution,

and this fact we cannot deny. The cursed sweat-shop, cruel child-labor, the evasion of industry by female help, and finally a tendency towards foolish competition prompted by neighborly pride, are causes which have had a great deal to do in bringing about some of our deplorable conditions today. To change those conditions and to uplift the fallen is the aim and the longing desire of the Catholic church. She will stand shoulder to shoulder with any man or body of men, and fight for the poor laborer's betterment, provided they do not ask her to renounce her God and His Divine law.

"The movement in which you are interested, my young friend, was never built to the capacity of taking this load upon its back. The sinews of its physical makeup are diseased and weak. The burden which it presumes to carry is too ponderous to exclude the danger of a crash. As I understand it, and I have tried to show you, Socialism is wrong even though it may have one or two healthy muscles in its system. If the socialist is opposed to religion, let him come out like a man and say as much, for then we shall try to convince him that he is wrong. If the movement is not opposed to religion, let them prove to us that it is not, by showing the complete catechism of their doctrine, and it is not until that time that we shall cease to warn those entrusted to us against the dangers of Socialism. The one great trouble with the question, Mr. Lanning, is the uncertainty of what it really stands for; in other words, it has too many handles to it.

"Too many of our people are swallowing the poison in small doses, whereas if the case were presented to them as it should be, they would become better and wiser

citizens. There are too many theoretical quacks on the market today; too many political nostrums to permit us all to escape without some taint or other. If men will open their ears to the teaching which the Catholic church has been voicing for the past nineteen centuries they would find no better pilot to guide them through the rock-strewn shoals of political and religious life. It is only when they begin to forget God and His law that they invent new movements and new theories for the so-called betterment of the human race.

"In conclusion I will say just one word more, as I see the hour is getting late, and I am sure you are becoming bored with my talking. I will say that the sooner the working-man ceases to take his religion from the secular press, and looks for the word of God in the place in which he knows it can be found, the sooner will he recognize in the Catholic church the true and only guardian of his own welfare, his family's honor and the spiritual happiness of his immortal soul."

"Father, you do not know how thankful I feel for your kindness in helping me to study a matter which of late has caused me the greatest uneasiness. You have set me thinking in the right direction, and if I do not at present entirely agree with all you have said, it is because I desire to take a little more time to weigh the matter. There are many difficulties as yet in my mind, and I am going to ask the privilege of another call. There are many things you have told me tonight which have impressed me very deeply, but I would be dishonest if I told you that my opinion of the question has been changed to such an extent as to make me desert the cause. I am afraid that it will take a little time to

convince me that Socialism is wrong, as I have been deeply interested in the question for some time past. However, Father, I am not so far gone that I will not listen to reason. There are many objections in my mind which will require some time to discuss, and if you will be so kind as to permit me I shall call again when the hour is not so late. I must express my sincere thanks to you, Father, for your extreme kindness and consideration." Meanwhile Lanning seized his hat and cane and walked into the hall, while the priest replied:

"Mr. Lanning, I did not expect you to surrender your convictions during such a limited discussion, and I admire you the more for your candor in telling me so, but I assure you that I will do all I can to enlighten you on the matter at any hour you may see fit to call upon me. Think the matter over very seriously, my boy, and I am sure that in the end you will be able to see that you are taking the wrong path in advocating Socialism. My arguments tonight might appeal more to the man of religion, that is, to one whose faith is anchored, but I see that we shall have to select another line of argument for you, since you are not blessed with the seal of religion. Good night, now, and study up for the next session, and you can have as much of my time as you desire, because that is in the line of my duty as a priest."

"Good night, Father, and thank you very much."

Lanning went out into the street still a socialist, but a more doubtful one, feeling in his heart that his new-found religion might prove to be wrong, after all. If his visit to Father Kennedy did not change his convictions com-

pletely it served the purpose of creating a doubt which in many cases prepares the prejudiced mind for the reception of later truths. The earnestness of the young agitator was evident from the frequent visits he made during the next few weeks, and the result of these calls we shall leave for future development.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LABORER'S REAL FRIEND.

FATHER KENNEDY recognized no mean opponent in the young socialist, and many an argument was carried back and forth in a friendly but determined manner between them. It was some time before the priest succeeded in helping his young friend in brushing away the cobwebs of his political erudition and in forcing him to admit that he was on the wrong road. The question of religion was broached on several occasions, but when Father Kennedy saw that Ned was not so enthusiastic on this topic he pressed the matter no further. A strong liking had sprung up in the young man's heart for the kindly priest, because in the course of their argument he noticed that his clerical opponent was a man who was willing to give his visitor full credit for every sound opinion uttered, and did not act as many persons do in taking an adversary's ignorance as a foregone conclusion.

Bob Larmon had been absent from his boarding-place now for some time, and of course Mrs. Mellody was beginning to assume an I-told-you-so look as she went about her work. Eileen's weekly letter failed to arrive at the appointed time, and this lent even greater weight to her mother's mournful suspicions.

One evening, when all the members of the household were seated in the parlor, Bob became the subject of con-

versation. Poor Mrs. Mellody was enumerating all the good things she had not done for him, while the scoldings, which Bob learned to enjoy to a certain extent, were now the regret of her life. Her dejected face betrayed the sadness of the thoughts that dwelt on her mind.

The gloom of the atmosphere was becoming too oppressive for Lanning's nerves, especially when he saw that Eileen was almost on the verge of tears, so, out of mischief he walked quietly over to the piano and began to play the minor chords of a funeral march, the only thing needed to bring the general sorrow to a climax. He succeeded only too well, as the women folks immediately proceeded to give tearful evidence of their pent-up emotions, while old John began to roar with suppressed laughter until Mrs. Mellody bolted out the door, half mad at herself for giving in to the men.

She had just left the room when the front door was pushed open with a bang that made everyone start, and Bob came rushing in, throwing his hat into one corner and his grip into John's lap. Without the least decorum he seized Mrs. Mellody, who had come back to learn the cause of the disturbance, and planted an earnest kiss on her cheek. With a puff and a sigh he finally landed in a chair to draw his breath.

"Say, folks, it's a real treat to see the faces of one's friends again. It's most a century since I was here last. What do you all look so blue about? The tax-collector didn't die, did he?"

"Bobby, dear," said the mistress of the house, "you don't know how glad we are to see you home again. We were just thinking that something had——" But here a rasping cough from her husband warned her. With a

"hem" and a "haw" that did not strike Bob as a natural interruption, she proceeded, "Oh, we were—well, we were only thinking you missed your train, you were so long in coming home this time."

"To tell the truth, I did miss a train every day, I was so anxious to come home. I'm dead sick of chewing this business-rag. But say, folks," in a mock undertone, "I've got a state secret. You couldn't guess it in an age, because it has taken that long to happen. "Me for a whole month's vacation, and if Eileen wants me to I'll make it longer. I'm tired of the road. I told the boss I was done with the job, but he made me promise one more trip, and when that's over, the Honorable Bob Larmon is a man of leisure as long as the money lasts."

The secret was certainly a surprise to all, and no one was more pleased than Eileen. The table was spread for the new arrival, with several extra dishes reserved for just such occasions, which tempted the others to partake of a second supper, even at the expense of a full night's rest.

Bob felt glorious at the prospect of being home for Christmas, which was fast approaching. "I haven't eaten a real Christmas dinner for the last four years. It's always been some dingy hotel where the turkey was nothing but the disguised carcass of an ancient rooster, noted for its ability to defend itself, even on the table."

During the whole meal he rattled along like a reporter, bringing the tears of laughter to the eyes of the happy little gathering with his comical allusions. The hour can best be judged when the meal closed from Mrs. Mellody's remark to her daughter, "Eileen, let's not wash the dishes tonight. We'll do them in the morning."

Lanning now began to cultivate the habit of staying at home, paying only an occasional visit to his old haunts on Market Street. He was still working at the dock-office, where he had already been for over two years. Reflecting that the greater portion of his wages had gone to the support of the gaming table, he began to save his little earnings, adding as much to the account in the bank as his living expenses permitted.

One morning, a few days after Bob came home, Ned missed his old friend, Mike Toohey, from his usual place on the dock. Knowing the boss as well as he did, Lanning immediately concluded that there must be something seriously wrong to keep Toohey from his work.

Mike was the father of a family of five children, the youngest of whom was a boy of three. He was a good, hard-working man, as honest as his looks, but like many another of his kind, he found his road pretty hard. His wife was a good companion for him, trying to hide the patches of life's quilt from the eyes of her devoted husband, while at the same time she found it difficult to bear the burden of her household duties on a very limited means. Toohey was not a drinking man, nor, on the other hand, was he a saving man. With the exception of an occasional dollar put aside for the payment on a property loan, his wages rapidly disappeared.

On his way home that evening Ned called at his friend's place, in order to find out what kept Mike from working. A frequent visitor at the little home, he was readily admitted by the good wife, who regarded him as the only friend they had in the world. With tears in her eyes the poor woman began to sob out her troubles to him. The husband, who was in bed in a rear room,

heard Ned at the door and called to him to come in. The wife dried her tears carefully, so that Mike would not discover that she had been crying, and the two went into the sick-room, where the patient was overjoyed to see his young friend. Mrs. Toohey stole out quietly about her housework and left the two to talk together.

"Well, Mike," exclaimed Lanning, good naturedly, "I never thought you would come to this. You always looked to me like the last man to stick to the raft. A few days' good rest is just what you need to get you in trim for that lifting-match we have on for next Monday."

"I did think I was in pretty good trim, Lanning, but it is a sure thing that we can't go against the will of God. Just the time a fellow gets ready to move his mountain, and begins to think he can get along without God or anybody else, something in his machinery gives out, and he gets religious all of a sudden, and that's me."

"Toohey, I wish I was in your boots as far as religion is concerned, but it doesn't seem that I can get my mind curious enough or scared enough to worry about the future. I am afraid it will take a good dose to bring me to my senses. The strangest thing about the whole affair, Mike, is, you can't puzzle me on the catechism, and I think that I know as much about the argument side as any of you, and yet there is something or other lacking. I guess it's as Father Kennedy told me the other night—that I might be able to explain the law of God from 'A' to 'Z' but still be blind to the light of faith."

"Lanning, my boy, take an old sinner's advice, and begin to think about your immortal soul right away. It's often been on the tip of my tongue to mention it to you,

but I always seemed to forget it. I've had an idea, Ned, as long as I have known you, that you did not practice your religion. I can never remember in our long talks, of you speaking of going to church; and another thing I have noticed, and that was your habit of steering clear of those arguments we used to have on religion at the noon hour. I soon began to put two and two together, and I saw right away that the son was not as good a man as his father, at least on religion."

"You are right there, Mike, and I must own up to it. I don't practice my religion, but it's a long story and I will tell you all about it when you come back to work in a few days. I came in here to find out what was the matter with one of my best friends, so tell me, Mike, it's nothing serious, is it?"

"I don't really know, Lanning, but I don't seem to be able to think since I took sick. My mind seems to be growing lazy and sleepy. It must have been a chill I took on the dock that last wet spell we had, because I haven't been warm since. I think I will be on the job again in a few days. My wife wants me to call a doctor, but I told her that's all nonsense."

The visitor had a faint suspicion as to the sick man's reason for refusing to call a doctor, knowing that his friend was in pretty close straits. Without a word to anyone, Lanning made up his mind to secure a doctor that very evening on his way home, and was just going out the door when the wife accosted him and whispered:

"Mr. Lanning, will you do a favor for me? I'm very much afraid poor Mike is worse than he thinks, and I would like you to call on Father Hayes, and ask him to

come to see my husband as soon as he can, but I don't want Mike to know that I sent for him."

"Surely, Mrs. Toohey, I will be only too glad to do so, but don't go worrying about Mike, because I know he will be around in a day or so. I'll send a doctor over tonight to fix him up all right."

"A doctor, is it, Mr. Lanning? Although it shames me to say it, we haven't a cent in the house only what will keep the rest of us while poor Mike is sick. We'll wait for a few days, and with God's help we may not need one at all."

"You need not worry about the bills, Mrs. Toohey, while Ned Lanning has a bank account. I suppose Mike never told you that I borrowed a hundred dollars from him a long time ago, and now is the time to pay him back when it will be most useful. Don't let him know that I told you this secret, as he might be angry with me. Good-bye, now, and keep up your courage, because worry is the worst kind of medicine for a good wife to take." Lanning hurried away lest she should read the lie in his face, glad in his heart that he had an opportunity to use his ill-gotten wealth in a purpose other than gambling.

An hour later, at Lanning's request, the doctor came in and found the sick man in a violent fever, tossing and moaning in his delirium, plainly showing that Toohey was a very sick patient. The physician administered a mild opiate in order to quiet him, and for a long time sat at the bedside, knowing that the case was no ordinary one, and finally decided that he could do nothing until further development. After giving the anxious wife a few necessary instructions for the night, and with a kindly word of encouragement he went out.

The following morning, in response to the call of Mrs. Toohey, Father Hayes came in, bringing a ray of sunshine into the sad little home.

He was a man about forty years of age, and had just been placed in charge of Saint Mary's Church, his first parish, after serving as an assistant for the last fifteen years. As yet he was unfamiliar with the neighborhood and consequently had not made the acquaintance of the family, but there was no need of an introduction between the pastor and his flock.

Father Hayes was not long in the house before he had the sorrowing wife smiling through her tears. The patient, who was himself again with the coming of day, expressed the greatest delight on finding the priest in the house, and by his cheerfulness convinced the visitor that there was no immediate danger. For some time the two remained in conversation, talking about anything and everything but sickness and trouble. The priest, as he was about to leave, went out into the kitchen to see the rest of the family, where he consoled the wife by telling her that Mr. Toohey was feeling very comfortable and gave no signs of being dangerously ill.

As he sat for a few moments in that little circle, looking around at the modest furnishings of the home, he could not help noting here and there evidences of the wife's preparation for his coming—a little bouquet of freshly-gathered flowers on the bare mantle, a clean though well-patched table-cloth, bearing the wrinkles of its hiding-place, while the poor wife herself was decked out in the best of her scanty wardrobe. Everything was

neat and clean, but there was a threadbare look about the house which did not carry the conviction of an opulent income.

With his usual regard for the feelings of respectable poverty, the priest soon found out that the day of starvation was not very far off, and in a kindly tone said: "Mrs. Toohey, as yet I am quite a stranger in this parish, but I will not be so very long, because I am out collecting for a few improvements on the church property. There is one thing I have learned long ago, and that is, that if we have no people we do not need a church, so the first thing I must do is to see that my people are kept alive. Now put this in a machine drawer until you need it some time." Then in a joking way he added: "The reason I am doing this is because most of my ancestors were noted for being miserly, and if you say a word of refusal I may be tempted to hold on to it as they did."

"God bless you, Father," answered the poor woman, unable to express her gratitude in words, while she raised her handkerchief in order to conceal her emotion. Before she could compose herself, the priest was out the door, leaving the good wife in silent meditation. After a few moments she rushed into the sick-room with the good news, whispering a prayer of gratitude for the welfare of their new pastor. On hearing of the visitor's generosity the patient's face lighted up with joy as he murmured, "May God keep the good man. Oh, then it's little we know our priests, Kate, until trouble knocks at our door."

That evening, after supper, a consultation of three doctors was held at the bedside of the sick man, who seemed to become more restless as the darkness came on.

Terrible spasms of pain soon began to torture the once powerful body, while most exhausting spells of vomiting set in at frequent intervals. The strange feature of the case was the yellowish color which the face assumed, giving the appearance of jaundice. The perplexed physicians came to no hasty decision, and it was only after a very detailed study of the strange symptoms that they arrived at anything definite. Their conclusion was a most serious one.

The anxious wife was waiting breathlessly at the door to hear some word of encouragement from the doctors. "Ah," sighed she, "if God would only spare him for a few years more, I would do anything. I would even take his place this very moment. Poor Mike has been such a good husband, and I don't know what I shall ever do if he is taken from me. Well, I mustn't stand here complaining against God, who has been so good to us all." With a heart-broken moan she leaned her head against the door-frame and silently murmured: "Whatever happens, He knows what is best."

In a few moments the door of the bedroom was softly opened and the doctor stood before her. "My good woman," he began in a tone of seeming encouragement, "your husband is not yet in a serious condition. At present he has a strange fever, but we are hoping that his strong constitution will pull him through. You must keep your children as far from the sick-room as possible, and above all, do not let anyone, even his own relatives, come into the house to see him. I will send a trained nurse over from the hospital to look after him tonight, so that you can give all your attention to your children, for whose sake I would advise you to remain

out of the sick-room entirely. Good night, now, and remember what I have told you." With a look of sad despair at the doctor whose verdict she had just heard, the wife rushed out into the next room and threw herself on the couch, weeping as though her heart would break. "Poor Mike, poor Mike, and to think I can't be near you this long night!"

A more disconsolate scene could not be imagined when Father Hayes came in shortly after, to administer the last sacraments to the sick man. He met the doctors as they stood on the sidewalk in front of the house.

"Father," said one of them, "you are taking your life in your hands in going into that house. There is yellow fever there, and we shall be obliged to put you in quarantine if you enter. You know that we must protect the community in such cases."

A sudden pallor came over the face of Father Hayes as he stood there with one foot on the lower step. It was not fear that made him pause; it was the thought of his new parish. As an assistant he had worked for years in the vineyard of his Master and just now, when he was to see many a day-dream realized, his choice mayhap would mean the end of all. The grace that induces a man to bind himself to the service of his God for eternity, now made itself felt in the priest's heart, and with a "Thank you, gentlemen, and goodnight," he entered the portal of death, where he knew that a fellow creature, an immortal soul, needed him.

The world at large gives little thought to those moments when a priest is obliged to choose between life and death. In fact, it is not a choice at all for the true servant of God; it is simply an unavoidable duty that he

must perform, whether on the field of battle or in the poisonous atmosphere of the most deadly contagion. How many a young soldier of Christ, just at the dawn of a long-expected day, after the labor and toil of years in study, is called forth on some midnight errand which means death for himself, as well as for the patient. When neighbors and friends will cross over to the other side of the street in order to avoid the pest-house, the priest must go into the chamber of death, even when he knows, or has good reason to know, that the finger of death shall in many cases be laid on his own shoulder.

Father Hayes knew his duty only too well to let the thought of his first parish deter him from doing the work of his Master. The look of joy on the patient's face as he walked into the room made the priest feel that he had already received a sufficient reward for his little sacrifice. With a saddened smile of gratitude such only as a deathly face can express, the sick man murmured a "Thank God." The priest administered the last sacraments with that feeling around his heart which the presence of death causes almost everyone to feel. It was with the greatest reluctance that he told the poor man of the nature of his sickness, not to discourage him, but to give him time to prepare for eternity.

When the patient realized that he was wasting rapidly under the terrible fire of yellow fever, in a feeble voice he bade the priest leave him at once. "Go, Father; I don't want to be the cause of your death. Don't stay in this room a minute longer. God knows I was praying for you to come, but I little thought it was the fever. Go now, and may God bless you and keep you from harm."

After a few words of encouragement to the dying man, Father Hayes went out into the night.

There was no need of a nurse for poor Mike Toohey; he gave up his soul to its rightful owner a few hours after the priest left. The next morning a big yellow sign was tacked on the front door of the little home, while a streamer of crape underneath told of the presence of death.

The discovery of yellow fever was the sensation of the New York papers that day, but owing to the care with which the case was handled and the sanitary precautions taken, further spread of the dread disease was checked, and the city saved from the devastation of a few years before. There were only two deaths; one was that of honest Mike Toohey, and the other became known a few days later, when the body of Father Hayes was carried from the church one morning before the city was awake. The two victims had been called to spend their Christmas in heaven.

The funeral of the man who was yet a stranger to his flock was attended by a few relatives and fellow priests. There was no worldly acclamation to mark the departure of God's hero in that silent hour of the morning; no regal fanfare to announce the passing of the humble cortege, and yet he was every inch a king, he, who died in the service of the poor laboring man. If a busy world could find no trace of the footprints of the good Father Hayes in the drifting sands of fame, there is not the least doubt that his name is chiseled on the everlasting walls of eternal fame.

All during the solemn ceremonies of the Requiem, a solitary mourner knelt apart from the others in the rear

of the church. With his head bowed to hide the tears that were streaming down his face, the stranger gave evidence of his bitter emotion. It was none other than Ned Lanning, who on that morning uttered his first heartfelt prayer since the death of his own father, and that prayer was for the two victims of the yellow fever. If the sacrifice of the dead priest was great, it was not without influence for good, for the last act of Father Hayes' ministry on earth, was to restore a wandering soul to its God—the soul of Edward Lanning.

The funeral party had left the church some time while the prodigal still remained on his knees in the silence of the house of his Father, pouring out his soul in thanksgiving for the gift of spiritual sight. The weird panorama of the past came up before him in all its reality, causing him to forget in a moment his somber surroundings. The little stories he had heard long ago at his father's knee now revealed themselves to his awakened mind as profound truths of religion. The picture of the dying Saviour came before his eyes, but only to remind him that he was in the ranks of the scoffers, jeering at the suffering Christ. Why does this scene sear and burn its way into his very soul? Why does his agitated imagination retain the image of the crucifixion?

As though in answer, the words of an absent friend are suddenly conjured up, reminding him of the long-delayed moment of grace. It has come at last—but what a cruel revelation accompanied it. In his silent reflection he gazed with anxiety on the varied past, but out of it all was unfolded but one scene which tarried before his view —the death of Christ on the cross. Could this be the light of faith—his new view of religion, that enabled him

to call up a scene that seemed to approach the reality in its every detail? He felt as though somewhere during his life, he had seen the face of his Saviour such as now appeared before his aroused imagination. Where could it have been? The answer flashed upon him in a moment, as he moaned half aloud, "My God, I am a thief." The recollection of his crime, weighed in the scales of his awakened conscience, made his face blanch with shame, while one of the first prayers of his little catechism formed itself in his heart and on his lips, "O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee."

The storm in the young man's soul that morning was a series of strange sensations, now of unspeakable joy at his enlightenment, and then of remorse for the sins of a darker day. The first rays of the rising sun were slowly creeping in through the church windows when Lanning, an entirely new man, made his way out of the little edifice, once more to face the problem of life, with what delayed success, God alone could tell.

The streets without were covered with the first fall of snow, which lay like a thin sheet over the awakening city, covering up the unsightly scenes of a vanished autumn. To Lanning it was the spotless symbol of God's mercy, covering with the mantle of purity the stains of an ungrateful world.

The seven o'clock whistle was just blowing when Ned walked into the office of the shipping company. The day was bright and cheerful, and the sight of the immaculate snow made everyone feel happy. The imaginary ring of sleigh-bells seemed to be in the air, and the anticipated joy of the approaching Christmas began to take possession of all. The darkest cloud in the horizon of Lan-

ning's sky was the absence of his friend, poor Mike Toohey, and it was with a saddened feeling of gratitude that he noted on the arm of each man as he came to work, a little band of crape, worn in memory of their deceased friend.

The last pay-day before Christmas arrived, and the men were filed up in front of the pay-window to receive their week's wages. As each one turned to leave, Lanning stood near at hand to remind him of the destitution of the Toohey family. Every single one of those big-hearted fellows contributed at least a dollar, even though it meant a few less presents on the Christmas tree at home.

If there is any charity in this world of ours, it is not in erecting institutions in order to bequeath our name to posterity; the real charity lies in the action which makes you feel that you were cutting your last loaf in half to give to some poor needy one, just at the time you feel like eating two loaves yourself.

There was no grumbling or hesitation on the part of those toil-hardened men, as they listened to Lanning's quiet appeal, but all gave their share with a cheerful heart, although it was not hard to see that many of the poor fellows needed every cent of their earnings for their own families. Nor did the earnest solicitor confine his efforts to the laborers alone, but he approached the officials and the higher salaried men also, with whom he succeeded very well, with the exception of Blakely, the assistant superintendent.

This man's salary was by no means a small one, and it was Lanning's hope that he would give generously to such a cause. Ned stated his errand to him in a gen-

tlemanly way, and saw him reluctantly sink his hand into his pocket to withdraw the small sum of twenty-five cents. With a pitiful look at the man, Lanning unconsciously hesitated for a moment before he accepted the miserly offering, not daring to say anything to his superior for fear of losing his position. Blakely saw his action, and said, "Well, ain't you satisfied? What more do you want?"

"Mr. Blakely, I'm thankful for what you have given me, but I hope that your wife and children will never need to ask for charity like poor Toohey's. The men who are working for you at ten and twelve dollars a week have given at least a dollar to the fund, and I thought that you might do as much as they."

"See here, Lanning; do you think I have money to burn? I'm sick and tired of this begging game. However, Mike was not such a bad fellow, and I'll make it a little better. Here's my last cent, except car-fare, so don't ask me for any more." With that he roughly tossed a fifty-cent piece across the desk. After thanking him, Ned walked away, aching to throw the money in the man's face, had he dared.

In all, the fund amounted to nearly seventy dollars, to which Lanning added a hundred out of his own now precious bank account. The joy on Mrs. Toohey's face as he gave her the money that evening repaid him for all he had done. She thanked him again and again, and promised to pray for him night and day.

In the quiet of his room that evening he became unusually pensive and morose as he thought over the events of the past. His mental journey led him to the entrance of the little church in far-off London, where he beheld

his old friend, Father Colton, standing in the doorway. "What an ungrateful wretch I have been," thought he, half aloud, "to be living all these years on the wealth of God's church! What a cruel farce I have made of my life! I, who have never known what it was to have a true friend, have ruthlessly insulted the only man who ever extended a willing hand to help me." The thought forced a blush of shame to his face, while he hastily seized a pen and began to write a letter to Father Colton. As he leaned over the table penning his thoughts, he suddenly dropped his work, his face assuming the pallor of fearful anxiety.

"What if he is dead! How could I ever go back there and face an entire stranger with my story of robbery? May God grant that Father Colton is still alive, and I may yet be able to lift the burden of crime from my poor soul. There is no one else in this world to help make amends for my sad mistake but the man whose friendship I have cast aside." After many interruptions the letter was at length completed.

"Dear Friend and Father:—

"With a prayer to God that you may still be alive and well, I send this epistle to my first and best friend. The grace of God has at last touched this vile and ungrateful heart of mine, causing me faintly to see the mistakes of the past. I suppose, dear Father, you have never been able to fathom the circumstances of my hurried departure. I would not dare to put that in writing which I would have no one see but yourself. Suffice it to say, that I am nothing but the lowest kind of a criminal and in-

grate. I am hoping that God will permit me to see you once again, if only to ask your pardon for the insult I have offered you."

"I shall work day and night, striving to repair the bond which existed between us, and which I have so ruthlessly severed. For God's sake, Father, if you are still in the land of the living, tell me what I can do to regain that precious treasure which I have lost through my own foolishness, your friendship."

"I beg of you to send one word of encouragement, to let me know that I can still call you friend. With a silent prayer that this letter may find you well and happy, I am a better and a wiser

"NED LANNING,
"218 Pearl Street,
"New York,
"U. S. A."

His task once finished, the writer immediately lost himself in the reveries of the uncertain future before him, while the music of the piano floated up from the parlor below, where Eileen and Bob were enjoying the evening together. The thoughts of the dreamer carried him back to the days of his innocent childhood, and then on through the events of his clouded existence in London, leaving him finally on the platform of the little Market Street hall. In dwelling for a few moments on the scenes of his socialistic conquests, a pang of bitter remorse suddenly took possession of him, and as though the horror of the revelation was too much for silent thought, he gasped with painful surprise, "What if I have been the miserable cause of taking some of those poor souls from the service of my God!"

The longer he reflected upon the reality of the situation, the more positive became his guilt. "What a patchwork I have made of my life! Not only have I stolen the ornaments of the house of God, but I have dared to rob heaven itself of the souls of men." The intensity of his thought prevented the solitary occupant from noting that the light from the little oil-lamp was gradually growing dim, until at last it sputtered feebly and went out, as though to remind the pensive dreamer that thus also will the precious light of faith become extinguished in the soul of the man who would war on heaven.

Even the darkness caused him no uneasiness, so much was it in keeping with the nature of his thoughts. At length he arose from his reverie, and gave a deep-drawn sigh of relief; there was yet a chance to repair, there was still one way open for restitution, at least for the restoration of those souls to God, and he now fully determined to take advantage of it. The sound of the piano from below had long since died away, and the silence of the surroundings all at once seemed to appal him. Seizing his hat, he went out to mail the letter, the answer to which would mean so much to his future happiness.

CHAPTER X.

A CHRISTMAS FIRESIDE.

THE NEXT EVENING when Lanning came home from his work, he found Mrs. Mellody and Eileen sitting in the parlor, surrounded by piles of boxes and papers in which to send off their Christmas presents. The serious look on their faces warned him of the danger of interruption. As he came in, the mother quickly threw her apron upon several articles on the floor which evidently were not for him to see. He had almost upset the plans of the plotters by his untimely arrival.

The supper hour was later than usual, owing to the occupation of the women in doing up their mysterious packages. When all were seated at the table the husband proceeded to remind his wife of a few precautions for the Christmas dinner, saying, "Mary, I hope you won't forget the 'seldom' like you did last year. It don't seem like a Christmas dinner without it, no matter how good the meal might be."

"Arrah, John, don't be plaguin' me with forgetting things all the time. Did I ever forget to do my best on that occasion? You men never, never seem to think of anything only your meals."

Lanning here interrupted the conversation with an inquiry as to the nature of the dish called "seldom." John assumed the responsibility of enlightening him, by

saying, "That, Mr. Lanning, is not a dish at all. I'm surprised you never heard about it in Ireland. That's the name we have for raisin bread. We call it 'seldom' because the raisins seem to occur so seldom in it, even though you were to use a barrel of them in the making." With a cough of triumph at his learned explanation the old man smiled across at Bob, as if to say, "What do you think of that now?"

"By the way, wife, what are you going to give your John for a present this year? I'd like to know soon, so that I could start smoking them right away."

"Oh, then, you're the rogue entirely, to be hinting for a box of cigars. You may as well content yourself now, for I'm not going to be having you smoking your lungs away on my account. I'm not going to be the cause of shortening your days by humoring your bad habits. You'll not know what I am going to give you until the proper time comes. We are sending a few little things to Aunt Kate's children and to some of our neighbors, and that's all. If you don't be awful good from now on I'll give you ne'er a present at all."

After supper the men settled around the stove in the dining-room, while the mother and daughter locked themselves in the parlor, where they resumed the work of doing up their presents, tying and untying them a dozen times or more, as they discovered a new place to add another little dab of ribbon. Scattered around the room were all the presents Mrs. Mellody had received for the last three years or more. There she sat like a judge, running over a mental catalogue of all the people who had ever sent her anything. Here a muff, there a table-cover, and somewhere else a dozen handkerchiefs, all of

which she put aside as too nice for her own use. Together with the late purchases, the floor presented the appearance of a holiday bargain-counter. She had succeeded in finding a present for all her friends except one, and she sat racking her brain for something suitable for Mrs. Charles. Her eye suddenly rested upon a beautiful apron all ribbons and bows, fit only for a show case, and guaranteed for five minutes' wear. The apron was a present of the previous Christmas from Mrs. Stanton, who lived in the next block to Mrs. Charles.

"Eileen, dear," said she after a long pause, "I do believe I'll send her this nice apron. It's too nice for any earthly use, except as a present. I'd give it to you, daughter, but I don't want you to wear anything but what my own hands make for you."

"Why, mother; what would Mrs. Stanton think if she knew you were giving her present away again?" said the daughter.

"O, she'll never know the difference, Eileen. What would I be doing with this doll's covering, and besides, I don't like her as well as I used to. I'm going to give this fol-de-rol away at any rate, because the moths will soon devour it if I don't."

"Mother, dear, you are becoming awful cross lately, and you know that the day after tomorrow is Christmas, and you must forgive everybody for the whole year."

"Arrah, child; I suppose it's true for you. I do believe I'm getting old and cross-like, and I'll forgive her this time."

Meanwhile she had the apron done up in a neat little parcel, on which she had written the name of Mrs. Charles, so she left it that way, while she confined her

forgiveness to her heart only. Eileen let the matter drop there, and the bundle was placed with the rest of them.

The following evening all came home with mysterious parcels under their arms, while Bob and Ned thoughtfully took the precaution of hiding their presents in a safe place. John, who was more or less accustomed to stop at the grocery or market on his way home, was this evening much later than usual. His delay was due to the fact that he had walked from the front to the rear door of several department stores in search of something suitable for his wife and daughter. After more than an hour spent between searching and pricing and shaking his head in doubt, he finally succeeded in making his purchases. By the time he reached home he was pretty well weighted down with groceries and presents. Puffing away from the strain of his burden, he was only too glad to drop them all on the kitchen table.

During the interval, while he was removing his working clothes, his wife proceeded to put the things he had brought into the pantry, in order to have them arranged for the morrow's dinner. As she put each article in its proper place, she carelessly removed the wrappers and, of course, could not help finding a small locket and chain and a toilet set. Suddenly it dawned upon her that she had opened her husband's presents, purchased for herself and daughter, and the poor woman blushed red at her mistake.

She was just hastening to put them in their wrappers once more, when John came rushing in, having bethought himself of his carelessness. When he saw his wife fumbling with the coverings he said in a tone of dejected resignation, "Well, I guess the cat is out of the

bag now, Mary. I can never keep a secret anyway. I promised myself to hide them till morning, but I'm not as spry as I used to be. Sure, I don't blame you for seeing them, after the queer hiding-place I picked out. It's just as well, Mary, because I know I would not close an eye tonight without telling you."

"John, dear; you are a good old husband to remember your scold of a wife. I'm ashamed of myself for opening the bundles, but I could not help it when you left them in with the groceries." With that she went over and kissed her husband.

John laughed at his clumsiness in handling the affair, and extracted one of the bundles, which he gave to her. When she opened the package, the only one undiscovered amongst the groceries, she found a peculiar looking box, which in reality was a gentleman's cuff-box, but the good woman did not recognize it as such. "Why, John dear," said she, in a tone of the most earnest appreciation; "how lovely of you to buy me this grand jewelry box! It's just what I have been waiting for these twenty years back. I never did have a place to put my breast-pins and rings, except in the old box in my trunk."

"Why, Mary," interrupted her husband, in a voice of superior reproval; "that's no such thing. I'm surprised at you for not knowing a writing box when you see it. These round ones are just the latest. That, Mary, is where you keep your pen and ink, and such things. I asked the clerk for the best on the counter."

"Well, John, dear; I was sure it was for my jewels, but when I come to think, now, I have very little jewelry after all. I'm just as well pleased for the nice present,

anyway. I'll find the pen and ink in the morning, and we'll have it on the parlor table for Christmas day."

After this bit of enlightenment John left the kitchen, where his admiring wife stood holding her present in a corner of her apron for fear of soiling it with her hands. Anxious to have her daughter see the beautiful letter-box, she hastened in to where Eileen was reading, and closed the door after her, saying in an undertone, so her husband would not hear her, "Eileen, child, I could not wait till the morning to show you the nice writing box your father gave me for Christmas."

"Writing box, mother," interrupted the daughter, as she examined the interior of it; "why, that is a gentleman's cuff-box. Don't you see this little round partition here on the inside; that is for keeping the cuffs in shape."

"Cuff-box, child; and me thinking it was a jewelry case." As a sudden thought came into her mind she fell into a nearby chair and gave herself over to a most helpless fit of laughter. When after some time she at last succeeded in recovering her breath, with tears of merriment, rolling from her eyes, she said:

"Oh, then I have to laugh at your poor father, and he after buying it for a writing-box! Do you know, child, what he told me to do? He told me to put the pen and ink and such things in it, and here, after all, it's a cuff-box. That's the man of it, and he buying such a thing for a lady!" She once more burst into another violent fit of laughter, after which she continued, "I must be careful or the poor man will hear me in the other room. If it were not a present, now, wouldn't I have the good

joke on him, and he so important like telling me it was a writing box! Sure, I felt in my bones that it couldn't be anything of the sort."

"But, mother," interrupted the daughter, who had just wiped the tears of laughter from her face; "I thought you knew better than to call that a jewel-case. It would take a large ring to fit on that big circle on the inside. J-e-w-e-l-r-y case, mother; well, that is the best blunder you have made in a long time!" No longer able to control her merriment, the daughter once more burst into laughter. Feeling that she had now become the victim of the situation, Mrs. Mellody walked out of the room, while a half-serious frown began to gather on her brow. Turning in the doorway she said in a tone of seeming severity, "Not a word, now. Let on that you don't know what the present is for, because I wouldn't want your father to know what a mistake he made."

Early the next morning the mistress of the house was up and stirring, arranging her little gifts in the most surprising places. The others remained in their rooms until it was time to go to church, no one having any thought of breakfast, because they were to receive Communion on that solemn feast. When the hour for Mass arrived, Mrs. Mellody asked Ned if he could not wait for his breakfast until after she came home. To this plan he readily assented, and to the delight of his friends he expressed a desire to accompany them to church.

The custom of going to church on Sunday seems to take the nature of a habit during the rest of the year, not through any lack of faith on the part of the people attending, but because of the tendency in all of us to become victims of routine. On Christmas day, how-

ever, we feel that it is a real God-given privilege to be present at the Holy Sacrifice, as it always should be for us if we were better Christians.

The solemn tones of the great organ, as it rolls out the dulcet strains of that soul-born musical prayer, the "Adeste Fideles," strike the ear of the worshippers with a strange cadence that centuries of repetition has made all the sweeter. There seems to be a touch of the heavenly splendor in the sight of those candles burning at the altar, although the eye has beheld the same scene many times before. On that occasion even prayer itself flows more freely from the human heart, while the sinner and the saint kneel side by side before the altar of their God.

The good people of the Mellody family filed into their place at the early Mass that Christmas morning, their souls filled with that calm Christian serenity which causes a person to forget the lesser things of life. The sight of those thousands of God's children approaching the Communion railing at five o'clock in the morning is one which cannot but dispel the clouds that separate this world from the next.

What was the surprise and joy of our little family circle on seeing Ned Lanning leave his place beside them and make his way up to the altar to receive his first Holy Communion. The sight brought the tears to Mrs. Mellody's eyes, and it was a prayer of real thanksgiving that ascended to heaven that morning from the hearts of Ned's four friends. For Ned himself there was no joy on earth that could draw from his lips more heartfelt expressions of gratitude and love, as did the joy of receiving his God for the first time. Mrs. Mellody, mindful of her

duty, left the church before the rest of the family, in order to go home and prepare the breakfast.

Such a breakfast was never seen in the little home. Every now and then a tear would roll down her kindly face, as she thought of her boarder's conversion. Happy, indeed, was she in thinking that God had answered her prayers, and that He had made her an instrument in bringing back a wandering soul. Nor is there the least doubt, that it was due to the silent influence of her motherly heart that Lanning had come to the right knowledge of God.

The others soon came in from church, with a "Merry Christmas" on every lip. There was no invitation needed to have them sit at the table, where all eyes were immediately directed towards Lanning, as though the first thing in order was an explanation of the pleasant surprise he had given them. Without a request he began the conversation.

"Say, folks, I received the best Christmas present of my life today. Father Kennedy and myself planned this little surprise for you, and we decided to keep the secret to ourselves until this morning. I have been taking instructions for some time now, but there is one cause to which I attribute my good fortune as much as anything else, and that is the influence of the prayers of my friends, and I don't know of any friends outside this house. I am neither an anarchist nor a socialist; I am a Catholic, and may God grant that I may always be such. With His help I am going to try to do my best."

There was a silent "Amen" for the realization of the young fellow's hopes. Mrs. Mellody, half choking with emotion, said, "Neddy, my son, I don't ever expect an-

other such Christmas present outside of heaven, if a poor sinner like me can ever enter there. Today I've got a present from God Himself, and I will never be able to thank Him enough for it."

The breakfast proceeded with an occasional interruption, until the crowning effort of the cook was brought in on the famous old Irish plate. It was a generous loaf of "seldom," about which John had cautioned her a few days before. The nice spoons were sparkling in the light, as though they resented their sunny location, being more accustomed to the darkness. John's heart gave a thump of joy when his wife, with much ceremony and a half-serious smile, brought in a box of cigars. The extraordinary request to smoke at table was readily granted by the ladies. The conversation did not get along very far, when John began to sniff the air rather suspiciously. In order to induce his wife to leave the room for a moment, he asked her if she threw any rags in the kitchen stove. "Of course not, John," said the wife in indignant surprise, "but I will go and see. I never did such a thing in all my life."

While she was gone, her husband leaned over to the boys and forced them to surrender their lighted Christmas presents, which he replaced with cigars of his own brand, saying in an undertone, "Boys, I don't like the smell of Chinese punk any more than you do. Take these while I throw those ropes in the stove. Don't let on now for the world but that they are the same Mary gave you."

The wife, after sniffing around in all possible corners in search of a smouldering fire, returned to the table.

"John, you must be dreaming; there is no fire except the one in the stove, because I looked in every corner."

"Well, wife; I was sure that a queer burning smell came from somewhere, and I thought it might be the kitchen. By the way, where did you get those grand cigars? You are a better judge of a cigar than your husband. I'm afraid I'll have to let you do all my buying for me."

"I'm glad that you like them, John. I told the man at Wanamaker's to give me the best box he had, and I knew by the looks of the fine box they were in that they were well worth the seventy-nine cents I paid for them. He was trying to coax me to buy another box on which there was ne'er a picture at all, and would you believe that the villain wanted as much as four dollars for them? But I told him that I was a lady, and would not let a young upstart like him get the better of me in a bargain."

Eileen, the disturber of the farce, began to titter, covering her face with her napkin. The others, not daring to let out their merriment on their own responsibility, took advantage of the daughter's daring, and they all began to roar with laughter. John, with the tears rolling down his face, asked his wife, whose countenance expressed uncertain curiosity, to put the precious cigars away until next Christmas, because he felt that it would be a sin of extravagance to smoke more than one of them in a year.

Bob and Eileen helped mother with the dishes, while the others went into the parlor to finish their cigars. Bob was quite handy about the house, and never hesitated to give a helping hand. There was another reason, however, for his willingness to help the women-folks, and that

was his liking for Eileen's company, as his greatest pleasure was found in being near her at all times.

The mother, who had occasion to leave the kitchen, came back just at the critical moment when Bob was juggling her sacred Irish plate in his clumsy way. With a suppressed scream she made a rush, and relieved him of the precious charge, causing him almost to drop it in the excitement. She sent the two of them from the kitchen, while she finished the dishes herself.

Bob and Eileen decided to take a walk in the bright Christmas sunshine, as was their usual custom in their leisure moments, which were few indeed. Once on the street, Bob began by saying:

"Do you know, Eileen, I pity the poor wretch who has no Christmas, or doesn't know the meaning of it; and yet there are a good many today who have sickness and poverty as companions, and that's certainly poor company for a Christmas dinner, don't you think so?"

"Bob, you can be serious, can't you? We do not often think of others when we have plenty ourselves. We're all more or less selfish. How many times I have wished for wealth, and do you know why? Then I could be happy in going into the hovels of the poor and helping them to know how good God is. If I were to marry a wealthy man, I'm afraid I would spend all his money for the poor. But who knows, I might be even more selfish than I am now."

"Eileen, do you remember one day, long ago, when I asked you what you intended to do when you grew up? At the time you were just tall enough to reach the mail-

box on the front door; but here you are now over my shoulder, and I don't know the answer to that question yet."

"But, Bob; I don't remember your ever asking me that question, and, besides, how could I know what I was going to be. Bob, you do speak so foolishly sometimes."

"Eileen, girl; I guess you hit the nail that time in saying that I am somewhat foolish. Today I feel so happy, it would take very little to make me absolutely irresponsible. What do you think of Lanning turning over a new leaf? He's a fine fellow, isn't he? I'd like to know his inside history; he's a living puzzle to me. He's one of those big-hearted fellows who don't say much about themselves. Now, when I do something you can always find my name in the 'want ad' column, looking for a job on some hero business."

"Mr. Lanning is quite nice, Bob, but he strikes me as being so serious in thought and action. One is never sure whether he is pleased or offended at what you say or do. The poor fellow's past must have been sad, indeed, for he never seems to enjoy the things that I like to see men enjoy. Now you, Bob, are more lively and more outspoken, though not always prudently so. Of the two dispositions I would rather have yours."

"What—say that again, Eileen," said Bob, eagerly looking into her eyes. "I dare you to say that you like me better."

"I did not say that I liked you better. I said that of the two dispositions, I liked yours better; but, you see, I'm satisfied with my own disposition; so of the three I choose my own."

"Say, Eileen, to be serious, I want to speak to you about something very important. There is only one present missing from my Christmas tree, and if I could only get that, I would do anything for it. I've been looking for that present so many years back, but Santa Claus seems to think that I am not good enough. If I only knew how to deserve it, I would try with all my might."

"Bob, what on earth are you talking about? Are you not satisfied with all the presents you received? I do believe that you are becoming selfish and covetous."

"Why should I not become covetous when such a prize is ever so near at hand, and yet seems so far away? You, Eileen, are the present I have been looking and longing for, ever since I have known you; and why should I not be selfish if there is any way I can make you my wife? Tell me what I must do to deserve you, and I will work night and day to accomplish it."

"Bob," said Eileen, with an unconscious blush, "are you going to make me feel sad on Christmas day, in bringing up that old story? Why can't you give me a little time to know my mind?"

"Time, is it, Eileen; why, every day of waiting is a lifetime for me. I know that I am not all perfection, and I must admit that I am not much of a hand to express my feelings in words. When I tell you that I love you, and have loved you for a long time, don't discredit my words. I'm afraid to say too much, or I'll spoil it all. All I want is a single word of encouragement to let me believe that my hopes are not in vain."

"I know, Bob, you are good in heart and soul. I always did like you for your open-hearted honesty. I'm going to ask a favor of you now, and I know you won't

refuse it. The last time I spoke of this matter I asked you to give me a little time to think it over. I'm going to ask you once more to let me have time to consider. But I will promise you faithfully that when you come back from your next trip, I shall have my answer ready, on this condition, that you do not refer to the subject again before that time."

"I'm only hoping that your answer will be favorable. If I could have the assurance that I am not unworthy in your eyes, I will gladly go with the feeling that I am coming back to marry the best little girl in the land."

"Bob, you never need fear your unworthiness. I have yet to find one in whom I could place implicit confidence more than in you. We have been the best of chums for such a long time, but I never dreamed that you would require this decision of me. Let us go home now and help mother with the dinner."

They reached home just as the royal turkey was ushered into the dining-room. Of course, they were too late to be of any assistance in getting the dinner, but the good mother was more than pleased to have her daughter out strolling with Bob.

Christmas evening came around, and after the supper dishes were put away, all gathered beside the cheerful fire in the parlor. John assumed the duty of marshal of the evening's entertainment, and arranged the programme in the nature of story-telling and music. Each one in the circle was cautioned to have a story ready in their turn, whether a ghost-story or a real personal experience, at the risk of paying a fine.

One feature about the home, which is not very often seen in this country, was the sacred practice, like the

people in Ireland, of placing a row of lighted candles on the inside sill of the front windows at Christmas time. Thus, in every street-facing window one will see a dozen or more of these twinkling lights, lending a little of their interior cheerfulness to the outside world.

It is a fairy-like scene to pass through a village in Ireland on that holy night, and behold the thousands of little stars lined up on both sides of winding lanes, as though each home were a tiny altar, extending a welcome to the Christ-child. In fact, it was just for such a purpose that the custom first came into practice.

Its motive is founded on the story of the birth of our Saviour, when the houses of the people were closed against Him. It was in reparation for this act committed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that Catholic Ireland lighted up her windows as a sign of welcome to the Messiah, to come in and share the shelter of any home in which these signals were seen. Even to the present day, no door in Ireland is closed against the stranger or poor beggar on Christmas night, lest under the robe of rags, may be concealed Christ himself.

John Mellody had kept up this practice ever since he came to America, and, of course, the lighted windows lent an extra charm to the gathering around the fireside. The story-telling proceeded as each one took his turn. Bob was right in his element, relating his experiences of the road, while John, with his usual ingenuity for manufacturing a ghost-story, had his wife, with her mouth and eyes open, as she hung on his every word, beginning with the old form of "Once upon a time," and ending with the usual "So put down the kettle and boil the tay, and if they don't live happy, that we may."

Lanning, for his part, gave a detailed account of some incidents in his own life, but he artfully concealed his identity under the person of a third party. The evening was brought to a happy conclusion with a spasmodic rendition of "Fogarty's Cake," the audience voting unanimously that John's voice was improving with every cough.

CHAPTER XI.

AN APPEAL TO REASON.

THE MOMENTS of real pleasure are fleeting, indeed, while the reality continually asserts itself at the most unexpected intervals, calling us from our reveries of bliss. Bright and early next morning all except Bob went off to work.

After supper one evening Lanning asked Bob to take a walk with him, to which he reluctantly consented, owing to the fact that he had intended going out with Eileen. As they strolled along, enjoying their cigars, Lanning said, "The reason I asked you out, Bob, is because I want you to attend a meeting of the socialists with me tonight."

"See here, Lanning, I thought you had given up all that nonsense long ago. I don't like the business they are in, and, besides, it is no place for a man who has just made his first Communion."

"But, listen, Bob; I have something in particular I would like to say to that crowd tonight. Before I knew what I know now, I gave a good many talks for them, and they have booked me for one tonight—thinking that I am still one of themselves. I have the presumption to think that I have been influential in leading some of my friends astray, and I am going over tonight to see if I can undo some of my foolish work."

"Do you think, Lanning, you can risk your hide in there if those fellows should take a notion to disagree with your opinions? Don't take any chances."

"I'm not worrying about that, Bob, as I have a few friends down there on whom I can depend, whatever the issue. I just want you to come along and see what kind of an agitator I'd make."

While making their way hurriedly through the busy streets of the city, where the evidences of the Christmas season were still in the shop-windows, the young orator became more and more serious as they approached their destination, well knowing that he had no easy task before him.

He had not been on the platform of late, notwithstanding that he had been approached by the committee on several occasions during the past month. The substitute who had been replacing him failed to arouse much enthusiasm at the two last meetings, but the announcement of Ned's return to the work was a sufficient motive to fill the hall. There had been a faint rumor that he had given up the cause entirely, but all doubt was removed the moment they saw him enter the hall and walk up through the center of the crowd, to take his place on the platform, where he was greeted with a generous applause.

The first face on which his eyes rested was that of his old friend of the dock, Jack Turner. Calling him to one side, Lanning whispered to him in an undertone, "Turner, you've always been a good friend of mine, haven't you?"

"You can just make that a sure bet, Lanning," said Turner, "and I'm there yet, if you let me."

"All right, Jack; I want you to keep mum about what I am going to tell you. I may need your help tonight, but I hope I won't. You've been on the doubtful list here for some time; that is, you don't just know whether this movement is right or wrong. Well, I was that way myself for a few months, but I know something now which has made me a new man. Jack, this whole bunch is wrong—you're wrong, and I've been wrong, and I'm going to try to prove it to them tonight. Now, a few of the real cranks may want to stir up a row, and I want you to keep your eye on them."

"Ned, my boy, I am converted already. Go right ahead and knock some common sense into that crowd. I'll just show them the door. I'm the royal sergeant-at-arms for tonight, so, good luck." With that Turner walked officiously to his place and sat down, leaving Ned standing on the platform alone. A hush began to settle over the noisy crowd, as the speaker, in a strong penetrating voice announced the appointment of Turner as sergeant-at-arms, and reminded him of his duty to keep order. Jack stood up and bowed clumsily at the honor conferred. This preliminary over, the young orator launched into the task he had laid out for himself the night he had written to Father Colton. The outcome of his experiment was doubtful, to say the least, and Lanning himself was by no means certain of the issue. He began thus:

"Brothers and Friends:

"There have been many occasions when I have stood on this platform to address you, and if that honor afforded me a certain sense of satisfaction, it cannot be compared with the pleasure I feel tonight on being per-

mitted to stand before you. If there is any man who has more right to get up on this platform and call you brother, I feel that privilege mine without presumption, because I know and recognize nearly every face in this hall. I know your good qualities as well as your failings, as you all know mine. Hence, when I stand here and address you as brother, I say it not without meaning. I have reason to believe I have done as much for the cause of Socialism as any man in your ranks. (Applause.)

"I was beginning to become somewhat over-confident in my knowledge, and felt that I knew all that there was to be known about the question. Since last I had the honor of addressing you, however, I have discovered that I was just a beginner in the alphabet of Socialism.

"Have I not stood here night after night and condemned the unjust tyranny of wealth; have I not condoned the miseries of the poor man and tried to enlighten him to the best of my knowledge, as to the ways and the means to a brighter day? I have been in your homes and seen the finger of death placed upon some dear one, because the proper means of sustenance was lacking. I have seen some of the men who are here tonight divide their scanty wages with the widow and the orphan, when I was in a position to know that they could ill afford to do so. I know this because I have been there to receive the gladly-given mite of charity; and it is because I know this that I presume to address you with the hope of bringing you to a better knowledge of the question at issue.

"What you have done or what I have done for God's poor ones has no comparison with a deed I have lately witnessed, and about which I want to speak to you to-

night. Before I relate this incident, which meant so much to me, I want to ask, how many of you here are fathers of families? Please raise your hands."

A sea of hands were raised here, while the speaker continued. "I thank you, and I want to tell you that I feel more at home amongst men who know the love of wife and children. As yet, however, I have not joined your ranks in this regard, but it is not because of my own desire. There is more sympathy in the heart that has known the sorrow of losing some dear one in the family. My story tonight will, I am sure, find echo in the heart of just such a man.

"I want to ask you here and now, is there a man—is there a father in this hall who would sit idly by and see a stranger come in and desecrate the sacred portals of his home, by taking from him the love of those for whom he would give his very life's blood? Would we not be justified in shooting the invader of this glorious land in time of battle? Would we not gladly throttle with willing hands a foreign enemy who would desecrate our beloved American flag? And yet, my brothers, there has not been moulded in this inventive age, the steel which would carry death swift enough to the thief who would come in, under whatever legal sanction, and take away that which is dearer to you than anything this earth can give—I mean the honor and love of wife and children. Need I ask you if I am right?"

"You are, go on, go on!" came with thundering acclamation from the crowd, which had begun to lean forward with bated breath to catch every word of the earnest speaker. Lanning continued: "There is only one scoundrel in this world more detestable, and I hope the

day is not very far off when you will recognize and avoid him as you would the grim reaper—death. That man of whom I speak is he who attempts to do away with, in fact, to drag in the ditches of foul dishonor, the sweetest name under God's sun—the name of mother. (Applause.)

"To be a little more explicit, I will say, that when the word liberty is used to destroy one of the grandest institutions in this world, the family, then, I repeat, there will be no mother. She who now gives us breath will be no more than a piece of common property, valued with all other commodities, according to the scale of supply and demand.

"Brothers, I am not becoming sentimental simply to impress you with my oratorical talent, which is limited, indeed, but I am here tonight in your interest and my own, and in the cause of truth. Any individual or institution that aims at the destruction of the character and name of mother cannot be your friend or mine. A man may steal my purse, or he may deprive me of the last loaf of bread which stands between me and death, but that man is a saint compared to the cunning individual who would blot out from my heart that God-given image of my mother."

The speaker was here interrupted by tremendous cheering and applause, which permitted him to regain his breath. As he stood there, the perspiration rolled down his manly face, while he appeared to be somewhat disturbed by the frequent interruptions, so earnestly anxious was he to frame the sentiments which were overflowing in his heart. The oratorical idol of the Market street hall had never before created such a sensation.

"Again, my brothers, there is another point I want to bring before you, a point of vital importance. In the course of my acquaintance with men I have reason to know that the mite of the God-fearing man is given with a heart behind it. I have been the unworthy instrument for collecting charitable funds on various occasions, and I have been observant enough to know the difference in value between the dollar given by the God-fearing man and the man who does not know or does not want to know Him. There is no place in this broad land of ours for the scoffer at religion, no matter what his standing in the community.

"Now, there are men who have become so unfortunate as to deserve all the odium that the world could heap upon them because of their crimes. It may be that they have built their thrones on the remains of defenseless widows and children, they may by their dishonesty have bankrupted a nation, or perhaps it is because they have steeped their foul hands in the blood of their fellow-man, but these crimes have been confined to the material world only.

"There is yet the man who would dare to break open the very vault of eternity, to steal the souls of men from their God in order to hand them over to perdition; for such a man there has not yet been conceived by mortal mind an adequate punishment. He is a blacker fiend even, than the man who would overturn the home and remove the most precious gem in God's diadem, the being we call mother. He who comes in, no matter what his plea or disguise, and presumes to separate my soul from its God, aims to deprive me of a happiness which is other than momentary—it is an eternal happiness.

"We have by comparison seen the horror of these various crimes as found in different individuals; but what are we to think of the foul institution which intends to carry out all these crimes together? Men, we do not want such a vile and dangerous society amongst us, do we?" The applause was a sufficient answer to show the speaker how he progressed.

"Six weeks ago tonight we had the honor of listening to an able speaker, Mr. Upton. There has been, to my knowledge, no speaker in New York who can hold my interest as he did that evening, and I think I have heard the best of them. I only wish we had more such men as he to teach us what Socialism really is. He handled his subject in a manner which left no doubt in our minds as to the doctrines of the movement. If we had a few more Mr. Uptons there is not a home in this city, or in this whole country, that could claim ignorance of the subject. Do you know I would give my last dollar to him if he would go into every large city in the land and repeat word for word the instructive speech he gave us in this hall not long ago."

If there were any doubts remaining in the minds of his hearers concerning Lanning's love for the cause of Socialism, they were all removed by this last eulogy on Mr. Upton, as was evident from their hearty applause, feeling, as they did, that Lanning was still in their ranks.

"Brothers, there's not one amongst you here tonight who has not some dream which he hopes to see realized at some future day, let it be the lifting of a mortgage from your home, or the attainment of some honorable position in your country's service. Not many weeks ago there was a man such as you, with a dream, and with

the same hopes for its realization, after waiting nearly thirty long and arduous years for his wish to come true. His hair had become gray from the worries and trials of duty well done, so that at forty-five years he looked to be seventy. This man of whom I am speaking, was just beginning to taste the sweetness of the long-expected day in which he would be able to build the castles of his hopes, when he saw a most dangerous-looking cloud approaching on the horizon of his happiness.

"Now, men, I want you to hear me to the end without interruption. You may not agree with me in every detail, but I am here tonight as brother talking to brother." The shouts of "Go on, go on!" showed him that he could hold their interest now to the end.

"The man about whom I was speaking," he continued, "had just stepped into the sunshine of success. One day he was called on to choose between his newly-found happiness and helping an entire stranger at the risk of his life. He chose the latter and gave his life to help his neighbor. If that is Socialism then I'm only too glad to be a socialist. But you will be surprised, my brothers, to hear that our friend, Mr. Upton, condemned this man who gave his life for his neighbor. He did not, it is true, condemn him as an individual, but he condemned in no uncertain terms the institution which this hero and many of his kind so ably represent. If, brothers, there is an institution in this world with an influence powerful enough to make such heroic actions almost an every-day occurrence, that is the institution for the poor man; and anyone who would boldly stand up before the people to vilify and condemn such a power for good had better not appeal to reasonable men for a hearing.

"My friends, I have been talking in a manner somewhat obscure, perhaps. I will now come to the application of my little story, if I can be assured of your attention for a few moments longer."

"Go on, Lanning, go on—we'll listen." Curiosity and expectancy brought those in the rear of the hall to their feet, while the air in the room seemed to hang heavy upon the breathless audience. The clang of a passing street-car sounded painfully clear in the tense atmosphere. Lanning nerved himself for one last appeal, which he knew called for all his powers.

"Many of you remember poor Mike Toohey, who died of yellow fever not long ago. For the benefit of those who never knew him, I will say that there was not a more honest, big-hearted laboring man in New York, and a man whom anyone would be proud to number amongst his friends. It was with a heavy heart that I attended his funeral. Just three days later there was another funeral, which took place in the early hours of the morning, before the eyes of men were opened. The second funeral was that of Father Hayes, the Catholic priest who cheerfully gave his life to bring the consolations of religion to a man whom he had never known outside of the sickroom. While we were shouting here about helping the poor man, the laborer's real friend was breathing the deadly germs of yellow fever, when the rest of the world would scarcely dare to pass along the sidewalk in front of the house of death.

"Did you see any account of this in the papers? No, you did not, and you never do, because the world has grown accustomed to the deeds of those brave men who court death in the performance of duty. You may say

to yourself, that is what they are paid for. Let no one who calls himself a man speak that saying aloud, lest a shameful blush reveal the absence of his manhood. If pay were the motive for a man to become a priest, I am afraid we would find very few aspirants to that calling.

"Is it a friend you are looking for, my brothers? You have not far to go to find one, nor do you need a guarantee that the friendship will last. Go, then, you Catholic men who may hear me tonight, and seek out your real friend, the priest of God, and stand by him.

"You have heard me speak of the man who wants to blot out the name of mother from the family; you have heard me tell of him who would steal my immortal soul from me, and if I remember rightly you agreed with me. Now I will tell you who that man is. It is he who knowingly and willingly becomes a socialist, such as Mr. Upton described for us not long ago. A man who can advocate all these crimes, such as I have explained to you, can be no friend of the poor man, nor of his family. The Catholic church, to which I now belong, is good enough for me. It is the oldest pilot in the world, and has weathered the seas for more than nineteen centuries, and there is no power on earth to prevent it from sailing in the teeth of the blast for another nineteen centuries.

"Men, I have learned to see through the promises of the system called Socialism, and I have concluded that I can join its ranks only when I have succeeded in tearing from my heart the love of a generous benefactor; when I can be born again to be a stranger to my father and mother, and finally when I can bury in oblivion the love of God and country."

The hush that hung over that vast crowd was painfully oppressive, just as when the thundering notes of a huge organ suddenly die out with a final crash, leaving the hearer oppressed with a feeling of suspended animation. For a moment there was an uncomfortable indecision whether to applaud or to hiss. Lanning cared not. Seizing his hat, he was half way down the hall, Turner following at his heels, before the crowd had come to its senses. As they saw him leaving, his manly face still expressive of his convictions, they all rose as one and cheered him to the echo. Even those who disagreed with him joined in the applause out of admiration for his manliness, and because they saw in him a character, the rarity of which makes it the more admirable.

Jack Turner and Bob were the first out of the hall, where his fellow-boarder almost hugged Lanning for joy. Ned had made ample restitution for his former ill-spent labor.

There was still one more payment, one more restitution to make, before our friend Lanning could look the world in the face. Would this debt be canceled as easily as his first had been? The uncertainty of the future was indeed a cloudy prospect, especially as this last obligation entailed something more than mere talk—it meant the sum of five thousand dollars. Where would he get such a sum? How enormous did it now appear in his eyes! And to think that a few months before he had scattered it to the winds! Ned little realized the situation which confronted him; it remained for a future day to depict the consequences of a thoughtless moment.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EXORBITANT INTEREST OF A CRIME.

THE CONSTERNATION that reigned in the Mellody family when Bob related the adventure of the evening could not be described. Even old John, who was about to retire, stopped in the middle of a yawn and lost all trace of sleep as he listened to Bob's account of the affair. The subject was brought up the next evening at the supper table, when Lanning interrupted his fellow-boarder by saying:

"I say, Bob, to hear you go on, one would think that the question of Socialism came to a sudden death at the hands of the great orator of New York, the Honorable Edward Lanning. Please do not mention the affair again, Bob, for my sake. I was only too glad to have the chance to give those poor fellows the benefit of the knowledge which God had so graciously given to me. If they had the same chance to see the truth as I have had, they would be far better Christians than I."

"But say, Lanning, you certainly handed out some unvarnished truths to that crowd. I believe that if you took the other side of the question I would have become a socialist myself."

"That's where the great trouble lies, Bob. If people were not so willing to swallow every new theory which is invented by oratorical spouters, and take the trouble to

look into the institutions that have been tried in the burning, the Catholic Church would never need a stronger argument for bringing in the stray sheep. We all seem to be alike, inasmuch as we, now and then, harbor the desire to throw off the old reliable halter and go out and browse on the fetid marshes of ignorance. It reminds me of the child who wants to grow to manhood in a day, for the sake of being independent of the paternal roof. I'm done with spectacular ranting. From now on I am going to look out for myself."

There was nothing further said on the matter, as Ned showed a desire to let the incident drop entirely.

The following morning on his way to work he called at the postoffice, as he had been doing now for several mornings, in quest of some word from Father Colton, but there was no sign of a letter. Every day now seemed to add to his forebodings, that bad news was all he could expect. His arrival at the dock immediately dispelled his gloomy thoughts. At the noon hour the young orator became the center of an interested crowd, while the affair which took place on the previous evening down on Market Street, became the general topic of conversation.

As all separated in response to the one o'clock whistle, Turner called Lanning to one side, and said, "My boy, you made the hit of your life last night. I am in the way of knowing that the best of the crowd down there have been won over. I knew my man when I told you that I was converted before you began."

"Thank you, Jack, for your confidence. I feel sorry to oppose the pet hobby of some of those poor fellows who have been such good chums of mine, but if the day

ever comes when they can see the landmarks to guide them on the right road, they will remember something of what I have told them."

"Lanning, the day has come already, for I haven't found two of the men here who have a word to say against you. Even Harry Taylor is going about with his thinking-cap on. I know one sure thing, and that is, Market Street will never see me again, unless you take the notion to hand out some more such talk."

"Jack, my friend, I want to ask you to do me a favor. Don't try to stir up any arguments around here on the question. Do as I am going to try to do from now on, and that is, to my mind my own business."

"Alright, Lanning; I'm wise. There won't be any arguments nohow after the talk you gave out last night. I didn't know what you were driving at for a long time, and you had us all thinking that you were still a socialist, until the very end. It was the best thing I ever heard."

Another week passed before Ned received the long-looked-for letter. When he came home from work one evening he found it on his bedroom table. Without even stopping to remove his hat, he seized it with eager hands, while an unconscious tremor passed over him as he stood there impatiently tearing open the envelope. The letter ran thus:

"Dear Friend:—

"God has answered my prayer. I have heard the voice of the wanderer for whom I have been patiently waiting all these years. Had I known your address I would have written you, but, alas, you left no trace of your destination. I have some very important news for you.

"Ned, my son, when you receive this letter, which I pray God may reach you safely, take the very first boat for England. I shall wait anxiously for you every day until you come. Enclosed you will find a little money to defray the expenses of the journey. Come, my son, without delay, and relieve my conscience of a heavy burden. May God guide you safely to the home of one who was and still is under all circumstances,

"Your affectionate friend,

"J. B. COLTON."

What tender irony there was in that letter; what unintentional reprehension did it not convey to the reader as he stood there in the silence of his room, beginning to realize for the first time what a miserable mistake he had made, in deserting a man who strove so earnestly to be his friend. The thought of his guilt made him forget the joy that he should have felt in learning that the priest was still alive. Passing his hand over his brow, as though to brush away the depressing thought of his perfidy, he placed the enclosed twenty-five pound note in his pocket. There was a ray of consolation in the fact that the priest was still in ignorance of the theft, and yet the remembrance that he still had to face the ordeal of self-accusation, gave him an uncomfortable feeling of dejection.

He was thus meditating when the call for supper came from below, causing him hastily to remove his soiled working clothes. He rushed down the stairs, where the others were patiently waiting at the table, to say the usual prayer before meals. The table, quite generous as a rule, was this evening decorated with those little delicacies which announce an extraordinary occasion. It was Bob's last night at home, and, judging from the attention Mrs.

Mellody gave to his needs, one would think that he was leaving for China on the morrow. Lanning discreetly said not a word about his own intention of leaving, preferring to wait until the morning.

"By the way, Bob," said Ned, "I have a box of cigars I want you to take along with you tomorrow. They may not be quite as good as those Mrs. Mellody gave us for Christmas, but I think you will be able to manage them."

"Thank you, Lanning; I'll be only too glad to offer incense to my Irish friend in leisure moments. When I make my will I shall not forget to mention your name, although I am afraid that I shall have nothing left but my grip and a bad reputation."

That night, just as Bob entered his room to retire, he heard a light step on the landing behind him. Turning around he saw that it was Mrs. Mellody, with a little paper package in her hand. She motioned him into the room ahead of her, and partly closed the door.

"Bobby, I have been waiting for a chance to give you this little present. It is a nice pair of scapulars the nuns made for me, and I had Father Kennedy bless them for you. I want you to put them on tonight before you go to bed. I wouldn't have John know for the world what I am going to tell you, as he warned me not to be bothering you with my superstitions. But I must tell you, Bobby, that I am always afraid that something will happen to you on the road, and I want you to wear these scapulars, so that the Blessed Mother will take care of you till you come back home."

"Say, mother; I wish I were as good as you. You are always worrying about those who don't deserve it. I never get tired of telling the boys I meet, how good you

are to me. The road is a queer place for a man who wants to be good, but there is no telling where I'd be now only for you. Some of the boys used to laugh at me when I knelt down to say my prayers morning and night, and I used to feel sort of queer at first, but you've got me all over that in your good, motherly way. I shall never be able to pay you back for all your kindness."

"Bobby, dear, the only pay I ask of you is, to always remember your poor soul, and try to keep from harm while you are away from this little home. And sure, maybe I only want to be talking, to be going on as if I were a saint myself. You may have a better chance of heaven than a wicked sinner like myself. Go to bed now, and get a good rest for the morning, and say just a bit of a prayer for me."

The following morning everybody was stirring earlier than usual. When all were seated at breakfast, Lanning, in a casual way, said, "Do you know, Bob, I'm going on the road myself today? I'm bound for London on the noon boat."

A prolonged "What?" came from all corners of the table, while he continued, "Yes, I received word last night that I am wanted in London as soon as I can get there."

"Well, what's coming next from you, Lanning?" interrupted Bob. "You've been springing so many surprises on us during the last month or so, that I begin to doubt you. By George, you're a mysterious customer! What's coming over you lately?"

"Perhaps I am a little queer without knowing it. However, I'm off today for London. I don't know how long I shall be away, but it won't be any longer than I can help, three or four weeks at the most."

"Oh, then you're the rogue, Neddy," put in Mrs. Mellody, "not to say a word about it last night. Is that the way you're going to treat me? And to think I haven't some little thing for you to take with you. It's bad enough to have one of you go, but, sure, we'll be lost entirely with the two of you gone from us."

There was a slight quiver in her voice as she stopped speaking. "Now, mother," suggested Lanning, "we're not going away for good, because this is too good a home to run away from. I'm going to be back about the same time as Bob, and we'll have a little reunion."

The father, who was unable to speak from his surprise, now caught his breath long enough to say, "Well, of all the schemes and thricks of this house. There's no telling what's going to happen next. Mary, dear, now don't you go to worrying about the villains; it's too hard to lose bad company." Here he winked across at the boys. "Now, haven't you got your own John left? And there's your daughter, Eileen. Well, of all the women I ever saw! I think I'll go and join them what-you-may-call-ems, the Christian 'signtists,' so I can wish a little common sense into your head."

"John, John, will you ever be serious? Here's the boys going to leave us in a few minutes, and you're going on with your palaver." Here she turned to Lanning, who was choking with a fit of laughter at the husband's remark. "I suppose you'll be after going to see dear old Ireland before you come back. Oh, then, I'd give my best dress to see the green spot once more before I die!"

"Arrah, Mary, ain't I going to take you back some day? When we get the little home paid for, I'll beg, borrow or steal what'll do us for just one look at the place of

our birth. I well remember the little thatch where I was born, and as I look back at it, it seems like a glimpse of heaven. The Lord knows I'm serious in wanting to go back to see the old home."

"I know, John," answered the wife. "You'd do it if you could, but it's hard scraping for us to be where we are. Mr. Lanning must tell us all about it when he comes back."

"I'll do that alright, and I'm going to bring something back from there for each one of you. We'll have a good time when we all get back home again."

"By the way, Neddy," said Mrs. Mellody, "I want to ask you to do something for me, and I'll never ask for anything better. If you are anywhere near the county Tipperary, take a little run over to Clonmel, and anyone will tell you where my brother, John Ryan, lives, and when you see him, take him to one side and whisper the name of Mary Ryan in his ear. I'll leave the rest to him, for he won't let you go from the town till you spend the night with him, and he'll have all the news out of you before morning. The little house in which he lives is just across from the 'peeler's' barracks."

"You don't tell me, Mrs. Mellody, that you were born in Clonmel? Why, that's only a few miles from Cashel, my own town!"

"Goodness, gracious, Neddy; you don't mean to tell me you were born in Cashel! And you're not the son of old Rob Lanning, who used to keep the draper's shop at Lower Gate? And you're not the son of his wife, Jenny Stirling?" An affirmative answer brought her to her feet, and with one rush around the table to where he sat, she threw her arms about Lanning's neck and kissed him in

the presence of the whole family, crying, "It's too much—it's too much for me to find you here in my own house!"

While she was composing herself, John gave one jump and landed in the middle of the floor in a fever of excitement. "Mary, Mary, there goes the last whistle, and it's on the job I should be, and not here in the house. I can see the boss breathing sulphur now. For goodness' sake, don't stand there talking about Ireland, but run and get my hat." The hat was found after the usual delay in searching for something one needs in a hurry. John clapped it on his head, grabbed his dinner-pail and rushed for the door. On the threshold he turned around and shouted back, "Good-by, boys; I hope we'll have you both back safe in a short while," and with that he was gone.

The last sight they had of him was with the napkin of the breakfast table still hanging from his chin, while Mrs. Mellody was sure she saw his slippers on his feet, which doubt was confirmed when she went out and found his heavy working-shoes still drying under the kitchen stove. At the out-landish sight of the napkin hanging from his collar, the poor woman made an unceremonious exit out the door and followed him half the block in order to remove the decoration, but John was rushing along under full pressure, with the napkin streaming behind him in the breeze.

The roar and excitement which met Mrs. Mellody when she came in, puffing from the effects of her futile endeavor can scarcely be imagined. Everyone was bursting with laughter, trying to keep from choking on the last mouthful of breakfast. The poor woman had forgotten all about Ireland and about everything else, except the disgraceful figure her John cut as he passed in review in

front of the neighbors' windows. "Wisha, wisha, that man will be the death of me yet, and to think that I saw Mollie Brown standing on her stoop, killing herself laughing at the two respectable Mellodys running like mad. It'll be the talk of the neighborhood—drove her husband from the house. Arrah, I'm to be pitied; it makes me mad entirely, when I think that lassy saw everything that was going on—it'll be glorious news for the badgers."

The poor woman was almost crying from vexation, until Ned spoke up, "Now, don't put all the blame on Mr. Mellody. I am sure that I kept you from getting him ready in time with all my talking. You must excuse me for laughing at the affair."

"Sure, I can hardly blame you for laughing, children, after the show the head of the house made of us all. But if you could hear half the stories they'll have about us, you wouldn't blame me for feeling like crying. Arrah, sure, what's the use of worrying anyway about what people think? They'll think, anyway."

Here she paused to wipe the perspiration of the chase from her forehead, and gave a sigh, as though of resignation to all the reports that might come knocking at her door in the near future. "Come now, children; you've been sitting too long already at the table. Run and get yourselves ready. And would you look at Eileen, here, as though she was waiting for her carriage! Child, dear, don't you know that you have no time to lose; you must be at the store in fifteen minutes. Hurry now, and get your things on this instant."

"Surely, mother, you have your hands full with this

house," interrupted Bob, who had just recovered his equilibrium. "There's no telling where we'd be only for you."

The daughter came in again, after putting on her wraps, and turning to Ned and Bob, said, "I do hope that both of you will enjoy your trips, and that you will take proper care of your health. Mother and father and I will find it quite lonesome, and the house will be awfully quiet without you. I must go now—good-bye." The sound of the hall door closing told them that she was gone.

The hour had grown quite late when the two travelers went about their preparations—Bob to pack his samples, and Lanning to gather the few necessaries for his ocean trip. Bob was soon ready, and came into the kitchen to bid Mrs. Mellody good-bye. "Good-bye, Bobby, and may God keep you safe till we have you with us again." When he was gone the poor woman unconsciously felt for a dry corner of her apron, and wiped away a solitary tear.

The same day about noon Lanning made his way up the gang-plank of the great steamer, which strained at its moorings, as though eager to start on its conquest of the deep. He was not long seated on a chair in a shady corner, when the huge liner glided out of the smooth harbor waters, tooting its warning to the pigmy crafts in its pathway. As the last traces of the city of New York faded from his view, Lanning began to experience a strange feeling of contentment, such as comes from the tasting of some long-delayed pleasure.

A peculiar sense of solitude now took possession of our young friend, left as he was for the first time in many months, to the sole company of his thoughts. The separation from his happy surroundings seemed to force him

into the most serious mood of reflection, as was evident from his frown, when a fellow-passenger attempted to enter into conversation with him. As he sat in his steamer-chair, his eyes looking into vacancy, his memory carried him back to the scenes of his crime. The ideal which his father had never ceased to hold up before him, was shattered into a thousand pieces. Could remorse cement the fragments of that broken image, Ned Lanning really deserved forgiveness, but there was yet a mountain between his present regret and his future contentment—the restoration of the painting which he had stolen. "God was merciful to my mother," thought he, "in not permitting her to see her son a thief."

The thought of his mother served to recall a very sad fact in connection with her death, and to this he attributed his unaccountable feeling of doubt as to the reality of her death. His enforced absence in Paris as a student of art, was the obstacle which prevented him from being present at her bedside at the time of her death, and it was this thought which now occupied his mind while the ocean liner plowed through the turbulent waves. A feeling of depression forced him to turn to the prospect of meeting Father Colton. The pleasure of finding him alive was not unmixed with a sense of shame at the admission he must make to his friend. "If I could only secure that painting," thought he, "and present it to the priest when I meet him. Bah—what am I thinking about: where am I to get five thousand dollars? What a fool I have been, what a fool!"

The misery of the situation forced him to seek the company of the other passengers in order to dispel the thoughts of his cloudy prospects. The voyage was un-

eventful, save that the weather was severe enough to cause nearly a whole day's delay before landing. Immediately on reaching port, Lanning boarded the night train for London, where he registered at one of the second-class hotels of the city, retiring to his room as soon as possible.

It was with no feeling of indifference when, after a refreshing sleep, he awoke to find himself in that big city, where he had spent so many fruitless months. The longing he felt while in New York to find his friend was not so strong, now that he saw no obstacle in the way. It is that shame-faced feeling which makes most of us hesitate at meeting an offended friend, which now took possession of Lanning, and induced him to begin a diligent search for the picture in the art galleries of the city. Realizing that he had a hard task before him, his first act was to sit down to a bounteous meal, with a copy of the London "Times" on the table beside him.

When he had satisfied the wants of his body, he seized his hat and cane and began his search for the painting, which he heartily wished had been at the bottom of the ocean for the last hundred years. In the course of the day he visited four or five of the principal institutions, walking from hall to hall, until he was weary and footsore, with no better result than to add to his feeling of discouragement. He was in no pleasant humor when he arrived at the hotel in the evening and seated himself at the table with only a slight desire for eating. He had been sitting at the table only a few moments, when he suddenly placed his knife and fork on the plate beside him and started for the door, almost forgetting his hat in his hurry. "Here I have been tramping the streets of

London all day," thought he, "looking for a needle in a haystack, when I should have gone directly to the party to whom I sold the painting and inquired as to its present owner."

He boarded a passing car, which in a few minutes carried him to his destination. The premises had been renovated within the past year, and it was with some difficulty that Lanning at last found an entrance, over which was the name, "Brand & Co." He was ushered into a private office, in which he found the proprietor writing at his desk. It was with a feeling of great relief that Ned recognized the gentleman to whom he had sold the fatal painting.

"I do not suppose, Mr. Brand, you have the slightest recollection of ever having seen me before, although I remember your face very well. I called here this evening to ask you to do me a slight favor. One night, over three years ago, I came to you with a valuable painting of the 'Crucifixion,' in exchange for which you paid me the sum of one thousand pounds. I regret very much having sold the painting at all, and I am now searching for it. Perhaps you could inform me as to its present owner, and at what price it is valued."

"Well, sir, I have a faint recollection of a painting of that description, but before I can give you any positive information about its disposal, I shall have to consult our records, which are kept in another room. If you will wait here, I'll be back in a moment."

The proprietor was gone only a few seconds, and returned with a well-worn record of past sales. Lanning, whose memory was only too clear on the matter,

gave him the exact date of the transaction, and with little difficulty the merchant found the item in question.

"I find here, sir, that the painting was sold one month after we purchased it from you for the sum of four thousand pounds. There is, however, no record as to the identity of the second purchaser, and I will tell you the reason for this omission. There are certain pictures about which the seller may not wish to give us any information, and in consequence, so long as we find no legal reason for not accepting the work, we place it on the doubtful list, and endeavor to sell it just as we have received it—without asking any questions."

The latter part of this explanation fell on deaf ears, as far as Lanning was concerned, so stunned was he at the enormous increase in the price of the painting. The power of speech seemed to have left him for a few moments, as he realized the bitterness of the situation, which had never before occurred to him. "Mr. Brand," said the caller, when he had recovered his self-possession, "the information you have given me has confused me not a little, and I hasten to thank you. Your words offer only the prospect of failure for the plan I had of redeeming the picture. I have searched most of the galleries of the city today for some trace of it, but my search was all in vain. Could you not suggest some place in which I could obtain some clew to its ownership?"

"I must say, sir, that you are putting me to a task," answered the dealer. "It may have found its way into some private collection, and I might suggest some of the names of these private owners."

"I presume it would be of no use, Mr. Brand, and I am very much afraid I shall have to give up the search.

I thank you very much for the trouble to which you have gone on my account."

Lanning walked out of the store a wiser, but a more discouraged man. "Twenty thousand dollars—what a restitution to pay! How little did I think I was chaining myself so firmly to the past!" It was out of the question now for him to imagine that he could ever secure the means of restitution. His crime was exacting its grim interest. How would the new Lanning pay the debt of the old? His usually active brain was in a muddle over the revelations of the past few months. In despair he walked back to the hotel and retired for the night.

The first thought which came to him on awakening in the morning was of Father Colton. His apparent ingratitude in keeping the priest so long waiting for him now appeared to him for the first time. The remembrance of the tone of his friend's letter made him feel rather dejected. He spent little time in dressing and breakfasting, and soon hailed the car which was to bear him to his destination.

It was with many strange sensations tugging at his heart when, after a few minutes, he beheld the little tower of Saint John's in the distance. He was counting the corners as they rushed by his window, when he caught his breath at a passing glimpse of the shop where, in former years, hung the sign "Lanning & Co."

On alighting from the car he found himself almost at the foot of the stairs leading to the priest's door. His courage failed him as he lifted the old-fashioned knocker. He stepped to one side on hearing a footfall within, as though he would avoid as long as possible this meeting with his former friend, while he felt more like the real

thief at that moment than ever before. When he saw that it was the old housekeeper who opened the door, Lanning was half pleased. He was informed that Father Colton was out on a call, and would be back in half an hour. Ned thanked her, and said he would walk around until the priest's return.

Some strange influence seemed to guide his footsteps in the direction of the church, for in a few moments he found himself standing inside the portals of the silent edifice. The solemn awe of the situation brought him to a sudden standstill as his eyes took in every detail of his surroundings. His glance settled fixedly on one object only—the painting of the "Crucifixion," the silent, though eloquent accusation of his perfidy. A peculiar feeling came over him when he realized what a tender religious sentiment pervaded the painting, done as it was in the darkness of his religious ignorance. The hand of God must have guided the brush of the artist without his knowledge, so mutely appealing was the countenance of the crucified Christ. The beauty of the work never impressed him before as it did that moment, filling his heart with a strong sense of regret in having neglected his calling.

What a bitter sermon did his brush prepare for him, to be heard after these years of silence! There was no other tribunal in the world which could so strongly make him realize the enormity of his crime than this mute product of his own brush. His artistic pride gave way before the thought that the work before him was the exact counterpart of the object which lured him into sacrificing his manhood. "Ah," thought he, "what would I not give to have the original in my hands at this moment?"

His eye no longer rested on the picture, which seemed to burn into his very soul, dispelling every ray of hope from his blasted life. The glow of the tiny red sanctuary lamp flickered before his vision, telling him of the presence of One who could refresh the sad of heart and lighten the burden of the weary—the God of hope. Instinctively he fell on his knees, and poured out his soul in earnest prayer to the Prisoner of the tabernacle, asking to be relieved of the self-imposed yoke. The world had nothing to offer him to make the restitution, not even his friend, Father Colton. It was God, he knew, and God alone, who could lighten the cross which bore down heavy upon him.

At this moment his thoughts were interrupted by the touch of a hand on his arm. The suddenness of the interruption caused Lanning to start as from a dream, and standing up hastily, he stood face to face with the man whose friendship he had bartered—Father Colton.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BASHFUL HERO.

A STRANGE PLACE, truly, in front of the altar of God, for the meeting of the two friends, but it could not have been better selected to prove the sincerity of their reconciliation. Neither spoke one word, but the pressure of Father Colton's hand convinced Lanning that the man he had offended was still his friend.

"Ned, my boy," said Father Colton, when both were outside the door of the church, "God has brought you back once more, and I always felt that He would grant my prayer. Do you remember one day in the past when I told you that my door would always be open to you? My invitation is now waiting for your acceptance. Come right in with me, so that we can talk more freely. I am delighted to see you."

Lanning's tongue seemed to have lost its power, while a feeling of joy held him in silent restraint, as he followed the priest like an errant child into the house. Once in the sitting room, Father Colton gently forced his young friend into a chair, commanding him not to utter one word until he had a good look at the wanderer.

Lanning, no longer able to bear the silent scrutiny of the priest, in a voice somewhat agitated, said, "Father, I don't really know what to say. Before anything else,

I must ask your forgiveness for the ingratitude of the artist, once known to you by the name of Lanning."

"Is it from me that you are asking forgiveness? Why, I cannot tell you the joy I feel on seeing you again. I'm the one to ask pardon for having my housekeeper turn my friend from the door. However, I am glad to see you back again, as big and strong as a hickory."

"Father, you cannot be more pleased to see me than I am to find you alive and well. My hurried departure was, no doubt, somewhat mysterious to you."

"To tell you the truth, Ned, it was a little hasty, but when I gave it more thought, I could scarcely blame you for seeking a better field for your work. I know that it was pretty hard to get along on what limited returns you had around here. I did feel somewhat hurt when you went away without coming to see me, not because I have done anything for you, but simply because I had taken an interest in you from the very start."

"If you knew how mean I felt for that same act in after days, Father, I am sure you would have considered it a sufficient punishment. I see, however, that you do not understand the real motive of my hurried departure, and it was just for the purpose of telling you this that I wrote to you some weeks ago. If, after you learn the perfidy of the man you took into your confidence, you were to turn him from your door, he would receive but his just deserts. I beg that you will listen to what I have to say, and you will see for yourself that I have every reason in the world to regret that, for the avoidance of which, I would pay any price. How well I remember that miserable night when I sacrificed my manhood and my best friend for the sake of——"

"Ned, my boy, it would not be fair for me to let you continue with an admission which I know is distasteful to you, especially since the facts of the case are already known to me. Ever since you left here I have been harboring a suspicion that you had made a serious mistake, and it is only since you have come to the house that I am convinced that my suspicion was right. I am almost certain that you cannot tell me anything about the matter which I have in mind. To sum it up in a few words, you have had a serious temptation, and you were not prepared to resist it. I would not presume to say that I myself am proof against temptation, so feeble have my efforts been for the salvation of souls."

As he said this, the priest went over to his bookcase, and took from the shelf the old copy of the scriptures which Lanning easily recognized.

"If you recollect, my son, you will remember to have seen this old relic before; it is the book we found at the bottom of the chest. Now, on the inside cover here (pointing to the place, while leaning over Ned's shoulder) you will notice some writing in Latin. It is a list of the articles which were hidden where you discovered them, all of which were accounted for except a certain painting of the 'Crucifixion.' You cannot imagine the sadness that came over my heart at the loss, not of the picture, but of my young friend. As soon as I made this discovery, I searched in every possible place for you, that I might save you from yourself. I called at the shop, and even watched the outgoing trains, but all to no avail. There is only one sad feature about the case, and that is your debt to God's church. Were the picture mine, were I the sole owner of it, I would gladly forget that it ever existed,

but such was not the case. The law of God places upon your shoulders the duty of restitution, as far as it is in your power to make that restitution. Aside from all this, which is in the hands of God, Father Colton is still your friend, willing to help you to reach the plane of your better self."

If the tears did not well in Lanning's eyes, his silence strongly indicated the sorrow that was in his heart. His duty of restitution he knew full well, but it was the fact that Father Colton had known his perfidy, even before he had left the city of London, which now added to his remorse. And yet he felt a certain sense of relief to think that he was saved the admission of his bitter narrative.

"Come now, boy, do not get discouraged. God is merciful and willing to forgive our thoughtless actions. Together, we may be able to find some way out of the difficulty."

"Father," said Lanning, finally, "I know full well the weight of the burden I have taken on my shoulders, and I have known it for some time. But to find that you were aware all the time of my cowardly action brings the blush of burning shame to my face. Your kind offer of friendship, however, will help me to face my task more cheerfully. If the debt which I have incurred is great, I still have the assurance that you have forgiven me. Instead of being discouraged, Father, your words have filled me with the deepest gratitude for that which I value more than all the wealth of the world, your friendship."

"Mr. Lanning," answered the priest, "there is no question of forgiveness on my part. I stand willing to do all in my power to help you to restore that which you have taken, not from me, but from God's church, even though

you have not yet made a restitution about which I spoke to you one day in the past—I mean your immortal soul. It belongs to God, my boy, and you have a serious duty before you, and that duty is to return to the faith of your father."

"When I told you, Father, that I realized my obligation concerning the painting, it was because I have already had reason to be grateful to God for the light of faith—I am a Catholic."

"Give me your hand, my boy," answered Father Colton, rising suddenly from his chair. "I am overjoyed at the news of your return to the church. I cannot explain why, but I have always felt that it would come about when I saw the religious tone of your art work. If God has helped you to make the first restitution, there is not the least doubt that He will help you to make the second. Come now, we will not talk of the matter again. There's the bell for dinner."

While at the table, Lanning was obliged to relate the circumstances of his conversion, which, as the reader will remember, must have been the source of the greatest interest to the priest. When he had finished the story of his strange conversion, Father Colton said, "My boy, the ways of God are wonderful, indeed, and we little know the moment of grace."

"In all the excitement of seeing you again," continued the priest, "I have forgotten to tell you some good news. Your Uncle James, on your mother's side, died about one year ago, and in his will he left you the neat sum of twenty-five hundred pounds. I have received this information from the priest in charge of the parish to which

your father belonged. He found that you were in this locality, and wrote to me to inform you."

"Well, Father, I can scarcely believe that this is true. It comes just in time, as it gives me a little more courage to face the issue before me, although I doubt very much if twice the sum will enable me to accomplish the end I have in view."

Father Colton, seeing Ned's tendency to revert to a distressful subject, made no inquiry concerning information as to the painting or its value, and was about to speak when his friend continued:

"What surprises me most, Father, is the fact that Uncle Jim even thought of me in his will, as he told my father time and again, that he would never leave one cent to a Lanning. I am afraid that if he knew that I had become a Catholic, he would have found a most convincing argument against leaving me anything at all; he was such a firebrand against the church. However, I shall not have any qualm of conscience in using it."

"There is another secret," continued the priest, "which I think will interest you more than the first. From what he told me, I concluded that you had the misfortune of being absent from your mother's funeral." Lanning here explained the circumstances, while Father Colton continued, "Well, this same priest had the pleasure of receiving your mother into the church on her death-bed. This was not known to anyone, nor was it even suspected, owing to the fact that her non-Catholic relatives insisted on having the funeral at their own church. So you see, my boy, someone has been praying for you all these years, and there can be no doubt that those prayers have been a guiding influence unknown to you."

"Father," said Lanning, half bewildered at all these revelations, "the news of my mother's conversion is the source of the greatest joy to me, and if I had the choice between that and a million sterling, I would rather the former a thousand times over."

"Ned, I am happy to be the bearer of this good news, especially as you are now in a position to appreciate it. May God grant she is eternally happy. We will say no more now, as the dinner is getting cold."

It all seemed like a dream to Ned; it was more like a picture of his fancy, while everything good appeared to come upon him at once—one joy being the harbinger of another. The dinner was passed over in enforced silence, which gave Lanning the greater time to think of his novel situation. In the little sitting-room the two sat down to enjoy a cigar, while they continued exchanging the experiences which had happened during the years of separation. Father Colton, who was getting pretty well along in years, finally was obliged to admit that he was in the habit of taking a little nap in the afternoon, and if his guest would not object, he would retire for a few moments.

Lanning was glad of the opportunity to go out for a stroll, and the good priest cautioned him not to stay away too long. Giving his promise, he started out to get a look at the old haunts. He could not resist the temptation to steal quietly into the little church, and there with bowed head, he uttered a fervent prayer of thanksgiving to his Creator, mindful of all the favors of which he had lately been the recipient. With one last look at the pic-

ture which had wrought such a change in his life, he left the building, fully determined to continue his search for the original.

While strolling along slowly through the heart of the city, his attention was suddenly attracted by a procession which wended its way quietly and orderly through the busy streets. The line was composed of about five thousand men, all poorly clad in their working clothes; while the emblem on the banner at the head denoted the purpose of the demonstration. It read, "Give us work." There was no comment from the crowds that lined the street on both sides; no one dared to hurl any word of scorn at that body of willing workers, because they well knew that the occasion was one calling for the universal sympathy of the world of toilers.

It was, indeed, an eloquent argument against the efficiency of the present system of the regulation of many of our large cities, where the overcrowding, and the lack of proper homes for the poor, give birth to a class of people, in the interest of which the municipalities will be obliged to alter certain of their laws. It is to the great shame of any city that many of our respectable toilers are forced through circumstances to enter the ranks of organizations, such as Socialism and the like. The problem is one by no means to be overlooked, and it would be well to devote less of the resources to the erection of heroic monuments and to city decorations, while the families of the unemployed and willing workers are in want of the necessaries of life.

The sight of that little army of men, as they filed slowly by him, touched the heart of our young friend;

who knew so well the days of want. He had seen nothing like it before, not even in the land of liberty. It is easy for the enemies of law and order to find recruits in the ranks of the unfortunates who can secure no work in the opulent cities of the world. While Lanning was gazing at the last of the procession, someone touched him on the arm, and said, "Blow me, if it ain't Lanning! Where have you kept your precious self all these years?"

In the speaker he discovered an artist chum of former days, at whose home he always found a warm welcome at a time when friends were few and money scarce. Charley Clark was an artist who had progressed at about the same rate as Lanning did while he was in London, and it was a difficult problem to make even a scanty living with his brush. Lanning had helped and befriended him on many an occasion, but it was more out of sympathy for a good little wife he had taken before he was well able to give her the assurance of a decent living. Besides, Clark was drunk over half the time, and spent what little money he happened to earn in the taverns. It was a sad scene that met Lanning's eye many a time when he called at his friend's home, where the faithful little wife bore the abuse of her foolish husband. This meeting with Clark on the street afforded no pleasure to Ned, but it gave him an opportunity to inquire about the state of matters in the Clark home. However, he did not immediately launch into that subject, but awaited a later chance.

Lanning was indeed surprised to be accosted on the street where he was acquainted with so few people. Turning to Clark, he said, "Who would ever think I would run across you, Charley? I had almost forgotten my old

friend. How have you been since I last saw you? You look about the same as usual, only a little more prosperous in your appearance."

"Well, I must admit things are going a little better with me than when we used to batch it together in the old days. Come along with me; I know the best little tea-shop in the city, and we'll talk over old times where we won't be interrupted."

"All right, Charley; I have lots of time just now, and your plan just suits me," answered Lanning.

A few minutes later the two were comfortably seated in a room on the upper floor in one of those little shops which are not particularly noted for the excessive consumption of anything so weak as tea, although it may claim that innocent-looking title. The place looked decent enough, so Ned, knowing how to take care of himself, made the most of the situation.

"Now, tell me, Lanning, where you have been all the time since you left the old haunts in 'calico row.' It seems good to find a familiar face in the gloom of old London. Of late I lost track entirely of the old crowd, and I am paddling away here without as much as a 'how-do-you-do' from anyone. Come up, now, and give an account of yourself."

"Well, to begin with, I am sure you don't know that I am no longer under the benign influence of royal England. I am at present basking in the sunshine of American independence. I have been in the States now for over three years, and I hope to have the honor of becoming a citizen of the best country in the world."

"You don't mean to tell me you've left us entirely? You were always a sort of a wanderer, and I won't be

surprised to hear you're in Africa before long. Are you still decorating the cloth?"

"Well, no; and I haven't touched a brush since I left, but I intend to go back to it some day. I am making enough to keep me, and that by working in a shipping office on the dock in New York. But, tell me, how is my little friend, Tessie? The last time I saw your wife she was not very well."

"Oh, she's all right. But I want to ask you, what are the chances over there in America, for—well, I won't say an artist, but a painter? Are they as stingy as this London crowd?"

"Well, that I can't say, because I have not been in a position to judge of the matter; as I told you, I have put the oils on the shelf. I know one thing, and that is, that if I were forced to begin art work again in London, I would begin to learn house-painting, as I really think there is more money in it. Do you live in the same old place, Charley?"

"Ah—no, Lanning; that is, we—I have moved to more comfortable quarters. I want you to call down and see my wife. I am sure she will be glad to make your acquaintance." Clark saw the blunder he had made, but lapsed into a sudden pensiveness, while Lanning interposed:

"What on earth are you talking about? I am beginning to think that ale is too much for you. I know Tessie, and I don't see any need for another acquaintance. It can't be——" here Lanning leaned eagerly over the table toward Clark, who could not prevent a shameful blush from betraying him.

"Why, yes, Lanning; you were just going to hit the nail on the head. I've been divorced."

Ned looked at his friend a long time, before he said a word. "Charley, I'm going to be honest with you, and admit that I was *not* about to hit it on the head, as you say; I was just going to express the thought that something else had happened to Tessie; in other words, I believed for an instant that she was dead. I never imagined you would come to such a thing as divorce. You know I've always been outspoken with you, Clark, and I am going to tell you now, that you have made the biggest mistake of your life."

"Oh, hang it all, Lanning; there is no use lecturing me. I could——"

"I know just the excuse you are going to offer: you are going to blame the poor girl for quarreling with you and nagging you because she did not want to see you drunk half the time. I'll bet a five-pound note that the divorce was not her wish, although the Lord knows she had more right to it than you. Now, Charley, I don't pose as a model myself, but when I see my friend acting the fool, I cannot keep my mouth shut."

"Now, don't go taking the good out of the whole thing. I've found a girl, who knows a thing or two about the world, and she's got a little fortune of her own, and why can't a fellow enjoy himself? The law permits it."

"That's just what I suspected, and that's one of the reasons why I don't think your sunshine will last; simply because she's got the purse. I don't wish you any hard luck, Charley, but I don't see anything else ahead for you. You have given up the most innocent little woman I have ever known; you've left her to face the world

alone, and I dare say you haven't given her a cent to keep her from starving, while you are having the best of everything."

"Confound it, Lanning; I don't want to hear any more, and I want you to understand me," said Clark, beginning to get angry. "I know I ain't done just the right thing, but I'm going to forget it."

"All right, Charley; I suppose it's no use talking now. I always thought the world of you two, and it hurts me to see you going astray. If ever you need me to help you get back to the old times, or see your way to doing justice to Tessie, I want you to let me know. I'm going to ask you for the poor girl's address."

"The last time I heard of her, she was still in the old home where we used to live. I know, Lanning, that you are trying to do what you think is right, and I'm a cad not to feel better about your generosity; but it's impossible to return to the old ways."

"I don't blame *you* so much as the miserable lawmakers, who haven't enough to do in running the country properly, but they must go poking into what does not concern them. It's a poor and ignorant system that must needs traffic in the sale of husbands and wives. There is nothing sacred nowadays in the eyes of the law, unless it bears the mark of pounds and shillings. What do we need of standing armies and fleets of battleships, while the senseless interference of legal presumption is causing more irreparable ruin within our most essential fortification, the family, than the combined force of a universal opponent could accomplish in a century?"

"I suppose there is something right in what you say, Ned, but I never take the time to figure out those deep questions."

"Well, no; and I should not think you could be expected to worry about such things, when your taxes are paying men to guard the welfare of the land. I think I would rather go down as the blackest kind of a traitor to my country, than to have the foul reputation of turning out the atrocious legal sanction that first permitted divorce. Why, nowadays, the law has nothing else to do but wade into the blood of millions of deserted wives and children, fattening on its nefarious work at the cost of the nation's well-being. Do you know why there is such a continuous need for charitable institutions today? It is simply because the mill of divorce is grinding out, much too fast for accommodation, the material which goes to fill these monuments of our so-called charitable age. Well, Charley, I guess I'll quit gabbing away here at such an unmerciful rate. I must move along now, and I am sorry if I have spoken a little harshly to you. I want you to forgive me, because you have my sincere hopes for success."

"Lanning, you are a queer customer, I'll admit; but I am not a fellow who doesn't know a friend when he sees one. I'm glad you are getting along so well, and if you can spare a word when you get back to America, why, just write. Good-bye now, and I hope we'll meet again some time."

The two friends parted company at the door of the shop, while Ned boarded a car for "calico row," with the intention of calling on Clark's former wife. He had just an hour before being obliged to return to the priest's

house for supper. He knew the location of the little home, where he was sure that he would find his former friend. As he ascended the narrow flight leading to an upper floor of one of those dark tenements for which London is noted, he was reminded of the many times he used to climb the rickety stairs of Aunt Jane's establishment in days gone by.

He rapped gently on the old familiar door, which still boasted of its dirty red paint, and was told by a weak, girlish voice to come in. When he opened the door he stood face to face with little Eva Clark, the only daughter of the unhappy marriage. The child remembered him immediately, and ran to his outstretched arms, crying, "Oh, it's Bud," the familiar title with which she used to address him on former visits.

"Hello, little one; where's mamma?" asked Lanning, lifting the child in his arms. "Has she gone out and left you all alone?"

"Mamma's at work, Buddy; she don't come home till supper, and I am here all alone, and I don't be frightened one bit, 'cause mamma told me not to."

"How tall you are growing, Eva, and what a clean little housekeeper you are! I'll bet mamma is proud of you, when she comes home and sees everything so clean. But, tell me, little one, what does mamma have to do when she is working?"

"Oh, my mamma makes nice dresses for the rich people, and she's showing me how to make them, too, so when I get big I can work and help mamma."

"I suppose you two make lots of money at dressmaking?" queried Lanning, while he waited expectantly to hear what the child would answer.

"Oh, my, yes; mamma makes lots of money, and I know, 'cause she let me mind her pocketbook. I always keep it where mamma told me, under the clock. I ain't afraid to tell you where it is 'cause you are good." With this the child ran over to the shelf, and after stretching her little arms to the limit, she had the purse in her hand, offering it to Lanning. When her back was turned Ned slipped a five pound note from his purse, and under pretense of counting the contents of the well-worn receptacle, he placed his little gift within, handing it back to the child with the remark:

"Oh, you are rich, I see; but you must put it back now so you won't lose it. Tell mamma I called to see her, but I could not stay for supper. I must go now. Won't you give me just one kiss, like you used to do?" The child, without a word, threw herself into his arms, and hid her face in his coat to hide a telltale tear.

Ned walked out of the dingy little room, his heart depressed with the sight of the poverty of the cheerless home. What a tragedy life is for some poor mortals, especially where the sweetness of religion is lacking! As he rode over to the church on the car, for want of something to occupy him during the ride, he drew out the contents of his memorandum pocket, as many of us do at times, even though we have looked them over a thousand times before.

In turning over the well-thumbed pages of his notes, he came across an old clipping from some newspaper or other. On opening it out he was more than surprised to discover the account of the disaster on the Thames. Immediately his thoughts reverted to Lady Arlington and her unaccepted invitation. The whole story rushed

back to him at once, and gave rise to a plan which he determined to carry out on the morrow.

His musing was interrupted when he arrived at his destination, and he hastened out of the car, to find Father Colton standing at the door, looking up and down the street for his tardy guest.

"Where in the world have you been all the afternoon, Ned? I was just going to send word to the intelligence office to ask someone to look for you. I'll never take my rest again in the afternoon, to make you go off and desert me like that."

"Well, Father, you must forgive me this time, as I got in with some old friends, and they would not let me get away. I thought you would not be around before I came back, so I took my time."

"Around? Why, I was upon my feet ten minutes after you left. Do you think I could sleep in all the excitement of your visit? My head isn't level yet, from knowing you are in London again. There, I forgot all about the supper; it's been waiting for some time."

The two sat down at the table, and began chatting away on various topics, until Ned told him of his finding the clipping from the "Times," which he took from his pocket and handed to the priest, who could make nothing of it. So Lanning was forced to tell him the whole story of the rescue of Lady Arlington. Father Colton refrained from eating while Ned repeated the incident which had made a new friend for him, and whose kindly offer to reward him had so unceremoniously been rejected. The priest gently reprimanded his young friend for his action, and advised him to ride over the first thing in the morning and pay his respects to the lady, if for no

other reason than to personally thank her for her kind intentions in his regard. Lanning admitted that such was the resolution he had taken on seeing the clipping amongst his papers. "Now, tell me, wanderer, where you have spent the afternoon," queried the priest.

"Well, to begin with," answered Lanning, "I ran across an old artist friend of mine, and I spent most of the time trying to convince him that he had made a serious mistake in his family affairs. Since I saw him last he has secured a divorce from a good little wife, and married again. It's awful, isn't it, the way people are getting the fashion of divorce?"

"It certainly is the crime and shame of our present-day classes," answered the priest with emphasis. "And yet, what's the use of shouting against it, while the guns of the law are standing guard over such a thing? If there is one thing which will hasten the end of the world, and bring chaos into the present order of things, I think that divorce has all the requisites. The trouble is that we cannot get the proper civil authorities to come to our way of thinking until it will be too late, and the damage done. But tell me, Ned, are you still keeping up your work with the brush?"

"Father, I haven't touched a brush since I put the last strokes on the work of the 'Crucifixion' as you see it in your church. I lost all heart for the work, because it used to make me feel depressed and gloomy, giving rise to thoughts I would rather forget."

"Now, don't be foolish, my boy, and neglect that heaven-born gift. God has simply loaned you that special talent, and He will exact an account of the interest you have earned on your loan. Do you know that there

are most eloquent sermons in sacred paintings, and God will hold you just as accountable for preaching in your way, as He requires me to announce His divine word from the pulpit?"

"I have made a resolve to take up the work again, Father, if for no other reason than my own pleasure; but I am afraid I will never depend on it for a living."

The evening was pleasantly spent by the two friends in discussing various topics of the day, until the lateness of the hour called them to retire. The last thought in Ned's mind was the prospect of meeting Lady Arlington on the morrow.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BOND OF GRATITUDE.

THE PROSPECT of an awaiting pleasure, coming with the dawning day into our drowsy recollection, is an elixir which infuses the serum of cheerfulness into the most unhappy nature. Lanning's rest had been disturbed by most unpleasant dreams, in which the lost painting played a conspicuous part. While at breakfast he mentioned it to Father Colton, who attributed the nocturnal impressions to an overindulgence in one of the housekeeper's culinary experiments, a mysterious fruit salad. "I've always noticed," said the priest good-naturedly, "that when I indulge in that innocent-looking composition, I wake up after having committed three or four murders." They both laughed heartily at this turn of the conversation, and the meal was ended without further interruption.

Ned left the house with a caution from the priest not to forget to be home in time for dinner, and as a punishment for his disobedience would be obliged to finish another dish of fruit salad. It was with many strange emotions that Lanning sat in the car which carried him to his destination, and it seemed but a few minutes when he was aroused by the call of Chatham Square from the tender.

A postman, on request, pointed out to him the home of the Arlingtons, which was separated from the rest of the

take this advantage of your kindness were it not for the hope of having you remember one who is unworthy of your friendship and esteem."

"Do you know, sir," said the lady smiling, "that I am beginning to take my friends seriously in accusing me of a lapse of memory. Can you not suggest some little incident of our last meeting, or where it took place?"

"I regret that you find this last resort necessary, owing to the fact that it lays me open to the position of being somewhat presumptuous in reminding you of a slight favor I had the pleasure to render, but for which I was amply rewarded, in having the opportunity to make your acquaintance. I have just arrived in London from America, and it was only yesterday, in an idle moment, that I ran across this little memorandum, which I think you will recognize." Ned here handed her the well-thumbed clipping and sat for a moment studying her face while she proceeded to read it.

Lady Arlington's countenance suddenly assumed an ashen color, as it dawned upon her in a flash that her visitor was the man to whom she owed her life, while she put her hand to her heart, and with a choking tone she murmured, "Can it be possible—was it you—now I am sure I know your face. You are the young man who saved my life." Before Ned could well prevent her, she seized his hand and, touching her knee to the floor, she bent down and pressed her lips to his fingers. "Mr. Lanning, I thank you for this opportunity of offering the sentiment of a truly grateful heart. You must pardon me for not recognizing you immediately, and yet I thought I could recognize you amongst a thousand."

"Dear lady, calm your agitation. I am sorry to recall those painful moments of the past. I came only with the hope of renewing in person the friendship which heretofore has existed in epistolary form, and not with any intention of arousing memories that were better forgotten."

"How stupid of me, Mr. Lanning, to have kept you talking here all this time, not knowing you to be the man to whom I owe my life! I wish my son were here to meet you, as he has often expressed that wish whenever we talk about that terrible night. If you could call again in a few days he will be at home, and would be only too happy to make the acquaintance of our benefactor."

"I should be glad of that pleasure, madam, but I must forego it, as I am to leave London as soon as possible. I must go now, as I have detained you too long, and, besides, Father Colton, with whom I am staying, will never forgive me for remaining away so long. My visit has made me exceedingly happy in seeing your ladyship well."

"Mr. Lanning, I want you to consider this your home whenever you come to London, which I hope will be frequently. Perhaps you would like to see how comfortable we are here; we've just moved into these apartments this fall. If you can spare a few moments, I will be glad to show you through the halls."

"I cannot refuse this kind offer, dear lady, but I trust you will not tire yourself on my account," answered Ned, glad of the opportunity to see the inside of the magnificent home.

"Come this way then, Mr. Lanning, please," said she, throwing open a massive sliding door, which moved by means of a button concealed in the floor. "This, you see,

is our reception room, and ball-room when the occasion requires, in the far end of which you will notice a small pipe organ, which is a source of great amusement to my son, as he is quite a musician. We have enjoyed a few receptions in this room since we came to these apartments, and it would afford me great pleasure to introduce you to some of my friends here on some future occasion."

Drawing aside the silk curtains of a door on the left, she then led her visitor into one of the most voluminous libraries Lanning had ever seen outside of the public buildings. "This is what my son calls his sacred room, where he is wasting his health in excessive reading. I am obliged to use force to have him go out in the open to get the benefit of the air. The stairway you see yonder leads to the upper floors, on which are the private chambers, and a recreation room where the visitors are at leisure to play billiards or whist or whatever else tends to amuse them. But you must see my 'sacred room,' as I call it, as I intend that my son shall not have the only sacred room in the house."

She then led Lanning across the yielding carpets into the generous hallway, and came to a door which faced the length of the entrance, and invited him to step in. Ned's eyes opened with unusual interest when he saw a magnificent collection of paintings lining both sides of the spacious chamber. "This is, indeed, a pleasant surprise, Lady Arlington, and I must agree with you that your room has every claim to sanctity. I am interested in art myself, and have spent a number of years painting the old masters. I must congratulate you on your collection of Rembrandts, in fact, it is the most complete I have ever seen.

I have every reason to admire your taste in the arrangement of your favorites."

"Mr. Lanning, I am delighted to know that you are an artist, and for that reason I value your opinion and appreciation all the more. I spend a great deal of my time in this room, and it is only my very dear friends to whom I grant an entrance."

The two walked around the room with extreme pleasure, pausing every now and then in front of some favorite, commenting on the beauty of each. Suddenly Lanning stopped as though lifeless, while he stood rooted to one spot, with his hand extended as though he were looking for some support. His face was like chalk, when Lady Arlington, noting his agitation, remarked, "Mr. Lanning, are you ill? Let me call the servant."

"No, no, dear lady; I feel somewhat agitated on seeing that for which I have been searching London since I arrived. It is that picture of 'The Crucifixion.'" Here he rubbed his hand over his eyes, as if to assure himself that it was not a dream, while his hostess remained in silent surprise at his emotion. "I trust you will pardon me for my weakness, but I must explain."

"Come over to this settee, Mr. Lanning," suggested Lady Arlington. "I fear you are not entirely strong. I am always interested in the history of my treasures, but I beg of you to defer your explanation to another time if it causes you any uncomfortable feelings."

Ned brightened up immediately, and took the proffered seat, and said, "What a child I am, to be thus unnerved at the sight of a picture; but I must tell you the story connected with it. There was a very dear friend of mine who was the unfortunate cause of the resurrec-

tion of that fatal canvas, which, I dare say, has cost him many a sleepless night. For years he struggled against the pinch of poverty, working day and night to earn an honest livelihood, but in spite of his best effort he could make no headway, at least financially, with his brush.

"One night, when working on the decoration of a church, fortune showed him the door to a treasure which had been hidden, perhaps for ages, between the walls of this church. The treasure, as I understand, consisted of a chest containing some sacred vessels, and a long roll in which was found this very picture, which, as you are aware, is of no ordinary value. This friend immediately saw the end of all his drudgery and poverty in the taking of this painting, and, being of a rather weak character, easily fell into the temptation.

"That very night he carried the prize home with him, and at the first opportunity sold it for the sum of one thousand pounds, feeling that the door of his future happiness was now open to him, and deluding himself with the belief that it would always remain open. But for the money he had received, he sold not only the picture, but also bartered the sacred confidence of a very dear friend.

"The day of retribution came when he began to see that wealth is a poor gauge of happiness, and while the sunshine of idleness lasted, he tried in vain to quiet the accusations of a wavering conscience. I realized the nature of his act as much as he did, and my better judgment prompted me to induce him to try to undo, as much as was in his power, that which could not but cause him a lifelong regret."

Here Lady Arlington interrupted the speaker, and said, "But, Mr. Lanning, did it not occur to him that the painting had increased in value as soon as its character became known?"

"I venture, dear lady, that he did not weigh any of the consequences of his act at the moment he sacrificed his manhood and became a common thief. Like the rest of us, he dared not listen to his better reason at such a time. This young man of whom I am speaking has since found out that he could not buy the picture again for four times the price he received for it. Out of sympathy for him I had taken it upon myself to look for the picture here in London. I was about to give up all hope of ever coming across it, because I have been in most of the public art galleries of the city without finding it. Is there not some reason for my surprise in thus seeing it in such an unexpected place, and under the strangest circumstances? I trust you will consider this little narrative as confidential, as I would regret to have him know that I have revealed a secret which his repentant moment has entrusted to me."

"The story is certainly a strange one, indeed," answered Lady Arlington, "and I shall treasure it very dearly, connected as it is with a work of art, which I prize so highly. How I would enjoy telling that interesting little tale to my friends; it sounds more like a passage in fiction than a reality. I would gladly help your poor friend for your sake, Mr. Lanning, but I do not see how I can part with a picture which has had a wonderful religious influence upon my son, for the sake of the money it would bring. Let me see," she continued slowly, "could I not in some way approach the priest in

charge of the church, from which the work was taken, and propose a return of the value in money. I would be only too glad of this occasion to prove my gratitude to you in performing this little service for the friend you esteem so highly. The financial consideration would not make me much poorer, as I have been looking for some worthy charity to which I can devote a portion of God's gift to me."

"My dear lady, you leave me at a loss for words to express my admiration for your nobility of heart. I beg you will cease to speak of the little service I had the good fortune to render you. I shall not forget to inform my friend of your unsolicited kindness, but I am afraid knowing his case as I do, that his one desire is to secure the picture itself, no matter what the cost, and though it were to take his lifetime to earn the value of its purchase."

"Mr. Lanning, I am sure your friend cannot know how much you are interesting yourself in his behalf; such a friend as you have proved yourself to be is not to be met with very often in these days. If I can in any way induce you to take advantage of the offer I have just suggested, and influence your friend to make the restitution in the way I have mentioned, I shall always be at your command. It grieves me to say that the picture could not be purchased from me for the value of my whole collection; or, to put it a little more correctly, that it cannot be sold."

"Your action in the matter is perfectly correct, especially where an affection such as you have for the painting exists," answered Lanning, although he felt his sanguine hopes fade suddenly at the last remark of Lady

Arlington. It was the doom of any further effort at accomplishing the one desire of his life. The bitter irony of the situation made him long to hasten his departure, while his words were but the echo of hypocrisy. He continued, at the same time looking at his watch, "The lateness of the hour surprises me, and you must pardon me if I am obliged to curtail my visit; I shall have a good scolding waiting for me when I reach my destination."

"I do not wish to be the cause of detaining you any longer, Mr. Lanning, but I must express my pleasure at the pleasant surprise you have given me today. It is my dearest hope to see you again at any moment you can spare the time to call, and remember that I extend to you the most sincere welcome to our home whenever you are in the city. If you wait just one moment the carriage will be ready. To what place shall I direct the driver?"

"To St. John's church, if you please, if it will not inconvenience you. I have had an enjoyable visit, and I am thankful to your ladyship for the trouble you have taken in my behalf."

"I hope we shall see you often, Mr. Lanning, and I promise you that you will not have as embarrassing a welcome as I showed you today. My memory shall not betray me, I assure you, the next time you decide to honor me with your presence."

The carriage was already waiting at the front entrance when Ned bade a final good-by to his friend. But what a wild series of thoughts assailed him as he settled back in the soft cushions of the conveyance! The momentary joy he had felt at the strange and unexpected discovery of the lost treasure was embittered a hundredfold by the peculiarly embarrassing obstacle. If he had drowned his

miserable pride and told his story as it should be told, there was no doubt but he could have secured the object of his desire at a favorable price.

"What a fool I have made of myself; what an ending after all my hopes and plans! There must have been some fatal spell on that miserable canvas—just at the time I was flattering myself with the hope of recovering it, it slips further from my grasp than ever. And yet, it is nothing more than I deserve. What would I not give if I could lift this load from my conscience; if I could have that moment of a fool's choice back again: but no, I have chosen the wrong road and must pay the penalty."

The irony of the situation in which Lanning found himself in the Arlington home was not conducive to pleasant thought, nor to optimistic hopes for the solution of his difficulty. It was an abnormal combination of the elements of gratitude, sincere though unproven; of hope, buoyant and yet blasted; of burning desire, ungratified, and, finally, of pride unbending, though suppliant. If he had been an entire stranger to Lady Arlington his prospects for securing the picture would have been far brighter; nor would he have to avoid the appearance of demanding a reward for the saving of his friend's life, as he was obliged to do under the present circumstances.

It was impossible in the situation, even to appeal to her generosity without leaving the impression that he was taking advantage of the fact that she was in his debt, and that was the very issue he wanted to avoid. On the other hand, how he longed to have the treasure in his possession! It made him miserable to think that the object of his hopes slipped from his grasp, simply because of empty formality. "What a farce I was acting!" thought

he. "What a muddle I have made of the whole affair! I did not think that I was capable of thus acting the hypocrite; but it was my success in prevaricating that has closed the door of opportunity fast against me. Ah, she little knew how she was killing my happiness in telling me that the painting could not be sold! What a cruel verdict, what a token of friendship!"

The carriage had come to a halt, and the coachman was holding the door open for some time before Lanning realized that he was at his destination, so taken up was he with his bitter reveries. With a start he jumped to the sidewalk and, thanking the driver, he slowly ascended the stairs of Father Colton's home, where the priest met him at the door. "Well, if you are not the tramp, Ned! You look as if you had just come in from a twenty-five mile jaunt, and yet I saw you arrive in a carriage. What is the matter, my son; you have a gloomy look on your face, as though something were troubling you."

He followed the priest into the sitting-room, and endeavored to coax a smile with the remark, "I knew I was in for a good scolding, Father, and I think I deserve it. Go right ahead, and see if you cannot put a little common sense into my head."

"Ned, my boy, you do not look as cheerful as when you left here this morning, and I am going to venture a guess at the cause, and I want you to tell me if I am right."

"Very well, Father; if you guess correctly I promise to tell you, but I am afraid you will not discover the truth."

"In the first place, you have been on another wild-goose chase after that picture"; here Lanning paled

slightly, as the priest continued, "and in the second place, you have either not found it or, having found it, you have learned the futility of trying to regain it. Am I right?"

"You are, Father," answered Ned, looking off into indefinite space. "I have discovered it in the possession of Lady Arlington, but of all the people in the city of London in whose possession I would rather see that painting, she is the last. It may be a strange statement to make, but I really mean it."

"My son, I think the hand of God directed you to make that discovery, for I must tell you candidly that I had not the slightest hope of your coming across that painting, at least for years. You may thank God that you have been so fortunate. But why, tell me, are you discouraged in the fact that your friend is the owner? In my mind there would be the greater reason for rejoicing in that very circumstance."

In answer to the priest's remark, Lanning related in detail the incidents connected with his visit, not even concealing the hypocrisy of his action in relating the story of the painting to Lady Arlington.

The priest sat perfectly silent, lost in the maze of thought suggested by Lanning's story. The situation was a most extraordinary one, indeed, and the novelty of it left Father Colton at a loss for a possible solution. "My son," finally spoke the priest, "if God has helped you to discover the painting, there is no doubt but that He will come to your assistance now, no matter what the obstacle. It is a strange situation, to say the least, but I think you have made a little mistake in your manner of dealing with your friend. However, let us drop the matter for the

present; more time for thought may suggest some plan to either of us. The first thing I want to know just now is, did you have your dinner?"

The suddenness of the question brought a smile to both serious faces, while the priest continued, "What a foolish question for me to ask, when I know you did not have a bite!" With that he rushed from the room calling, "Kate, Kate, prepare some dinner for Mr. Lanning just as soon as you can; he's getting weak from starvation. Be sure and put on two plates for him."

The priest came back into the room, laughing at his thoughtlessness, saying, "That's the way with me, when I am satisfied myself I think the whole city of London ought to be satisfied. Your return to my house, after such a long absence, is a joy that has upset me entirely, so that I cannot remember anything. Now, if you promise me that you won't think about that picture again this afternoon, I'll think out some way of helping you in your difficulty, if there is any way out of it."

"Very well, Father; I'll do the best I can. I feel a little fatigued, and while you are taking your nap, I'll do the same, although it kills my night's rest to sleep in the afternoon. The money I am to receive from my uncle's estate would be nothing to me if I could only get my hands on that painting; I would be willing to give ten times that amount to be rid of this burden."

The voice of the housekeeper here disturbed the conversation by announcing that Lanning's dinner was on the table. The priest was glad of the chance to avoid the disagreeable topic Ned was about to open again, so he rose and took his guest by the arm and led him to the dining room. "Kate," said the priest, calling to

the housekeeper, "Is there any more of that fruit salad Mr. Lanning likes so well?" "No, Father," answered the innocent woman, "but I will not forget to have some for supper." "There, I have no chance to punish you for coming late," said he to Ned. "You've escaped the penalty this time, but look out the next time you disobey me."

The delayed dinner was passed over very quietly, after which both sat talking for a few minutes. Lanning was glad of the opportunity to take a little rest, but limited his time to about half an hour. When he awoke the light of day had given place to the sombre shroud of darkness, leaving no chance for him to imagine what hour of the day or night it could be. He had even lost track of the time of the week for a moment, so sound had been his slumber.

Father Colton, hearing his guest stirring in his room, came up and remarked: "I hope you had a good rest. Do you know how long you have slept? Well, it is just four hours ago when you left me in the sitting room. I have been out and made several calls since, and you had no one to disturb you. You were badly in the need of a rest. Supper will be waiting for you when you come down."

"Well, father," said Ned in the midst of a refreshing stretch, "I guess I have broken all records in this house. I feel like a top which has all its body in its head. I did not know what part of the world I was in when I woke up."

"When you come down I will tell you of a little scheme I have thought out. All my best plans come to me when I have a cane in my hand, strolling around the parish."

In a few minutes Lanning made his appearance in the sitting room, greatly refreshed after his long rest. "Oh, by the way," said Father Colton, "I was nearly forgetting to give you this letter which came for you this afternoon." Lanning seized it eagerly, wondering who could know his address to send a letter to him. Immediately he thought of Mrs. Clark, the poor woman who had been absent when he called. There was no mark on the envelope by which he could trace its sender. It lacked even the customary postage stamp, showing that it must have been brought by a private messenger. Without questioning the priest about the matter, he carefully removed the envelope, to find in the corner of the paper the name of the Arlington family. "Father, it is a letter from Lady Arlington, and there can be no secret in its contents which I should hide from you. If you will be seated a moment, I will read it aloud."

"Lady Arlington to Mr. Lanning:

"Dear Sir:—I beg you will pardon the tone of this letter, and should you find a single word herein to cause you the least regret, I trust you will overlook it as coming from one who would be not only a friend but also a mother to you. Your kindness in calling on me yesterday can be exceeded only by your gentlemanly deportment in the unexpected situation which confronted you. It grieved me very much to be forced to act as I did yesterday, but it was only because I desired to avoid an admission which could be better made in a letter.

"Dare I say, that I clearly saw the generous motive underlying your conduct in relating that incident connected with one of my treasures? I realized the embarrassing position, in which you were obliged to choose be-

tween a consideration of my feelings and the injury of your own. The manliness of your choice has forced me to thus address you in a manner more than plain.

"I saw in the words of your story that you were withholding from me the fact that the third person of whom you were speaking, and in whom you took such interest, was, and could be, none other than yourself, remembering as I did the embarrassment you felt on first seeing the picture. I knew only too well your position as my benefactor, and felt that this circumstance alone prevented you from opening your heart to me.

"Recognizing, as I did, the kind consideration you showed on my account, I cannot but express my sincere gratitude for the gentlemanly manner in which you avoided an unpleasant issue. If I told you that the painting could not be sold, I did not inform you that I might be inclined to offer it as a bond of sincere gratitude. You will in no way be indebted to me in accepting this slight token of the esteem in which you are held in the Arlington home. I trust that it will be the means of restoring to you the peace of conscience you so much deserve.

"The little mistakes of life, especially where a dear friend is concerned, impose upon each of us the obligation of remedying them whenever it is in our power. I do not see how I could hope for my own happiness in selfishly retaining that which is essential to the peace of one who deserves and merits my gratitude, as you, my friend, have done. Therefore, I trust you will not hesitate in accepting this little present in the same spirit in which it is given—willingly.

"I have waited until darkness to send it to you, so

that no one shall know its nature or destination. Do not say one word to my messengers for the same reasons. Trusting that I have been enabled to be of some service in bringing a little happiness to a fellow creature and friend, I am still gratefully yours,

"LADY ARLINGTON."

The priest and his guest stood looking at each other for a few moments, neither daring to break the silence. Lanning was filled with an oppressive emotion at the thought of this unexpected and undreamed-of generosity. Finally, in a choking tone, he said: "Father, I am the happiest man on earth at this very moment. I cannot find words to tell you what a heavy load has been lifted from my shoulders; you can never know how mean and helpless I felt today in thinking that the last chance of repairing the past was shut off from me. What a noble woman I have found in that dear lady, who has given me a glimpse of the joy, which, I am sure, can exist only in the future life!"

"My son, there is no one more pleased to see you happy than I am, and may God grant you may always be so. There is only one reason why I shall be glad to see that picture coming into my house, and that is because it is the price of your contentment and happiness."

While they were answering the call to supper, the door-bell rang, and with a whispered, "Here it is now," the priest admitted two men carrying a large, cloth-covered article between them. They deposited it carefully in the hall, and after receiving the thanks of the priest, the door closed behind them, leaving the two friends looking at the ghost-like object. Father Colton took Lanning by the arm and said: "I am not going to

supper until I have seen this famous trouble maker. I am sure it was not worth half the worry it caused us."

He lifted the covering, and with Ned's help removed it entirely. The gas-light in the hall flickered uncertainly and the priest turned it higher in order to get a better view of the strange wanderer. It was encased in a most beautiful frame of gold and inlaid enamel, but the painting itself looked dull and lifeless in color.

"Why, I do not see anything to that but the frame," said Father Colton in surprise. "Besides, there is nothing strange about the picture. I've seen one just like it, only brighter, many a time, but I cannot tell just where."

At this juncture a voice from the kitchen interrupted them: "Father, come to supper. I've been calling you for ten minutes now."

"All right, Kate," answered the priest; "I'll be there in a moment."

"As I was saying, Ned, there is nothing about that to make a man worry. Let me see, where have I seen it before?" The priest paused for a minute as he tried to remember.

"I can tell you," answered Ned, "where you have seen one like it. It is in your own church. This is the model from which I copied the painting over the altar, and about which there was so much delay."

"I was positive I saw it somewhere," Father Colton responded, "but I never once thought that it was in my own church. Do you know, I would not take half a dozen like this for the one in the church. The only thing

I like about this is the frame. Come, we will go in to supper. Kate will kill me for keeping the supper waiting."

The meal was indeed a joyous one for Lanning, who was brimming with unconcealed happiness at the return of the fatal painting. The world was open to him again, and he now could begin life anew. There was no longer any shadow to dim the beams of happiness that filtered through the clouds of his existence. The joy of his guest afforded the greatest pleasure to Father Colton, and the two sat for nearly an hour, laughing and chatting away, while the world outside was wrapped in darkness, unmindful of the final and lasting reunion of the two friends.

CHAPTER XV.

A LAND WHERE THE HEART GOES WITH THE HAND.

THE MORNING AFTER the restoration of the painting to Father Colton, Lanning penned a very carefully-worded letter to his friend and benefactress, expressing his extreme joy and surprise at her generosity, as he felt that he could not trust himself to call on her again without laying himself open to a wrong explanation of his conduct on his previous call. If his pen could interpret the feelings of his heart, the letter would have been most ardent indeed; but being at a loss in this regard, he did the best he could under the circumstances and sent the reply, after tearing up a dozen unsatisfactory efforts.

It was sad news to Father Colton to hear that Ned decided to leave London and cross over to Ireland to settle the affairs concerning his uncle's estate. After an hour's conversation, the two reluctantly exchanged the words of farewell, and the now happy traveler was driven off to the train. The satisfactory solution of all his troubles permitted him, in the exuberance of his joy, to appreciate every little detail of his prospective trip to the land of his birth, even though he intended to remain only a few days.

The trip across the channel was short and enjoyable, favored as he was with good weather. He spent most of his time out on the deck, watching anxiously for the

first glimpse of the land so dear to every Irish heart. The thought that he had not set foot on his native soil in nearly eight years made him wish that the miserable little steamer had never been fitted for service, so slowly and so laboriously did it make headway.

There is no people under God's sun who seem to treasure up so miserly the memory of some little spot in Ireland, called home, as do the Irish. Every tiny hamlet nestling on the breast of some verdant hillside; every thatch sending up the incense of its cheerful fireside into the azure blue, has its hero and its heroine in some distant land, longing for the little nest at home. Each tiny hawthorn or gnarled hedgewood forms the frame for many a mental picture in the minds of the exiles of Erin, etched as they have been in the amorous studio of youth, and brightened and enlivened in coloring by the renovating oil of hope.

The city of Cashel, in the county Tipperary, is not unknown to the student of Irish history. In the memorandum of the traveler it will be recalled on account of the huge mound of rock which rises out of the surrounding level, lifting its nose as if desiring to learn how its distant mountainous neighbors are standing the finger of time. The top of this rock is crowned by one of the most interesting and striking examples of those silent ruins which dot the Emerald Isle.

Stealing its name and reputation from this very rock, at the side of which it cuddles, the city is situated in one of the most fertile spots in verdant Ireland. At one time, in the days of its martial glory, it served as the seat of the kings of the country; while even today it boasts of the title of "Cashel of the Kings."

The rock from which the city takes its name is surmounted by the still splendid ruins of King Cormac's chapel. Even in its accusing nakedness it gives to the tourist and the lying historian a most powerful proof of the ancient grandeur of Irish architecture. The seared and weather-stained walls, which have defied the ravages of time, only to succumb beneath the envious blow of the English ravager, are still grand in their regal poverty, giving mute but eloquent testimony of the glorious days of the storied past, when the Catholic Faith in Ireland raised up to its God these silent blocks of chiseled prayer.

It has been left to this modern day to produce the agonizing combination of the preacher-historian, who, not content with distorting the word of God, must needs pose as the guardian of historical truth, calling the attention of the world to the fact that Ireland owes her architectural glory to the efforts of the English church. What a soul-racking discord to sound in the ears of common sense! How sad to hear the wailings of a creature, deserted alike by reason and learning; such a being calls, not for censure, but sympathy.

The city of Cashel, the proud possessor and guardian of one of these adamantine poems, is a very neat little cluster of Irish homes, with their whited walls and slated roofs, each one striving to jut out as far as possible beyond the line of march of the winding street, as though straining to get the first glance at the hoary mound of rock blocking the terminus of the wandering lane. The city itself has a singularly attractive appearance, with its quaint, many-gabled roofs and dormer windows looking out in respectful contemplation on the large Celtic cross

doing its duty as the Lord's sentinel in the center of the market-place, reminding the buyers and sellers of the law of justice and honesty.

It may not be out of place here to ask the question why foreign countries are flooded with such disgusting caricatures of Irish home-life, giving the impression that the people can be happy only in rags and dirty poverty? Why is it that the counters of our American stores are loaded down with the repulsive postal-card of the ragged "fish-woman" and the "pig in the parlor"? It is because English spite and hatred, through the medium of a paid London press, still finds a sedative in lampooning the poverty of the Irish peasant, who, if in rags, it is because his royal mantle is on the back of some hair-brained lord, conspicuous only for his wealth in pounds and poverty in sense.

There is no reason for any lover of his home-town in this country to go down to the dingy, dirty holes to select a sample of art with which to advertise the beauty of American homes. There is not a city in the world but has its ragged edge, nor are the cities of Ireland any exception to this general rule, having their shadows as well as their bright spots.

It may be that in Ireland, when tourists and travelers find the least trace of poverty in a land where they expected a counterpart of heaven, such a blemish appeared to them as a noteworthy discovery, and they felt it their duty to let the world know that all was not sunshine. Thus is life filled up with the venders of criticism, and, strange to say, the shouting is done by those, who, in order to make a good impression of their own ragged

situation, keep dinning the ears of men with the poverty of their neighbors.

Ned Lanning, to whom we will now return, on landing, boarded a train for the city of which I have given a very sparing account. His reception by his old friends and relatives was such only as Irish hospitality is noted for, and which we shall describe in the course of the story.

It was to the humble little home of his father's youngest brother that the traveler directed his steps, drawing the curious attention of the inhabitants as he passed through the streets of the city, leaving a trail of ominous whispers behind him as he met each passer-by.

There was a pause and an "Oh!" and finally a rush, when he first stood in the doorway of his uncle's home. It took but a minute for the inmates to recognize the stranger, but in that moment they were hanging from his neck, overcome with the emotion of their surprise. Immediately a broadside volley of questions was fired at him from all corners of the cozy little parlor, until he had to give up in despair by asking for a place where he could remove the signs of his journey.

The news of the arrival of a wanderer spread through the streets of a town like wild-fire, owing to the fact that it is a land of real neighbors. In consequence, all who are fortunate enough to be able to trace relationship, even to the most remote degree, rush to the haven which shelters the arrival in order to show their joy and appreciation on his return. The word relationship over there lacks the narrowness of the limited circle of the immediate family abroad, for it permits a claim even for the almost forgotten friends of childhood.

The hour of Ned's arrival was rather late in the afternoon, and it seemed like a few minutes before the table was groaning beneath the weight of a generous supper, which was an exhibition of everything grand in comparison to the ordinary daily menu. The conversation ran along the usual inquiries about what happened since the wanderer left the old home. The meal was brought to a close rather abruptly by the early arrival of the relatives and guests, who had been good-naturedly turned away earlier in the day, with the request to call after supper.

That evening the little sitting-room was scarcely large enough to accommodate the host of friends and neighbors who came to welcome the guest; while everything available in the way of a chair was gathered in from the nearby houses.

Ned was the center of all eyes, occupying the prominent chair, answering an occasional question amid the laughing and talking of the happy crowd. Old Mrs. Toolen, unknown to him, managed to secure the favored position at his elbow, and she wondered what right any one had to put in a word when she had Lanning all to herself, boasting of the fact that she had held the visitor in her arms when he was a baby. She artfully concealed the item that she had often longed to lay her hand on the lad for teasing her in later boyhood.

"Neddy, boy," she interrupted at a lull in the conversation, "have you seen my daughter Maggie over there in America? Sure, I'm lonely this many a day for the sight of her, and I was in hopes you ran across her when

you were abroad. Oh, then she was the good girl to her mother, and it was the sorry day for me when she left."

"Now, Mrs. Toolen," answered Ned, in a kindly tone, "you forget that the United States is a big land, and I don't think I'd run across Maggie in a hundred years, although I remember her well."

"Ah, sure, I was hoping I might hear a word from her; she does not write as often as she used to. If I only knew that she was well, I'd be content. She was the finest girl in the city of Cashel, God bless her, and she must be the grand lady now. One more look at her and the Lord knows, I'd die happy."

Such was the nature of more than one inquiry from the dear old parents concerning a long-absent son or daughter. The old folks, especially, seemed to think that Ned knew every one who had ever left the shores of Ireland. It was not so much from ignorance as from the loving hope that some little message or remembrance might reach them through the visitor. There they all sat talking over the old times, and about all the changes that had taken place since Lanning left.

The talk was suddenly hushed and the surprise of the evening came when "Blind Tom Sullivan," who had been sitting quietly all the time, walked over to an obscure corner, and to the pleasure of all he carefully uncovered a set of Irish pipes. Fondling his treasure as if it were a child, he resumed the place reserved for him with a knowing smile, while the crowd began to remark: "Oh, then you are the rogue, Tom, and here we were coaxing you all night in whispers to go home and get the pipes, and to think you had them here all the time! You'll have to give us an extra whirl tonight after deceiving us."

The buzz of excitement increased when the son stealthily extracted a violin from another corner. The tuning-up process was the signal for the clearing of the center of the room, which operation squeezed the old people into impossible corners, while the young folks began to cast sidelong glances at prospective partners, with a tacit agreement that Ned was to be in general demand.

First a squeak and then a grunt came from the pipes, leaving no chance for the uninitiated to form any opinion as to the nature of the music that could come from such a strange instrument. An occasional screech came from a fractious string on the violin, and it seemed as if the instruments would never become harmonious. Just at the time every one was sure in his own mind that the tuning could not be improved upon, the artists would begin all over again to tighten this key or loosen that, putting their two heads together to catch the finest edge of the tone, amid the impatient buzz of the merry crowd.

Before the rest were well aware of it, the "Rocky Roads to Dublin" was in full swing, while the feet of the surrounding circle immediately felt the necessity for action, tapping in time to the music. The limited space permitted the accommodation of only four couples, who entered into the spirit of the dance with all the relish of happy children. There was nothing sickening about the style of dance, but it was one of those simple square dances in which a real artistic use of the feet is required, showing the skill acquired by the participants in many a test on the cross-roads.

The jigs and reels were spun off in endless succession with that precision which makes the old Irish music

so happy and soul-stirring in the hands of her masters. There sat the old piper with a smile of complacency and satisfaction, indifferent to everything around him save the crooning of his chanter and drones, seriously intent upon catching the triple noting which is so characteristic of Irish harmony.

The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all, especially when the programme was brought to a close about ten o'clock with a contest between two of the older women of the neighborhood, each one striving to dance the other down. Tom crowned the whole affair by giving the final proof of mastery of his instrument in rendering the piper's favorite, "The Fox Hunter's Jig." It was with much reluctance the little circle broke up, and all left for their homes.

Lanning did not retire until late in the night, kept up as he was by the questions of his happy relatives. At last he found himself comfortably settled in the little room in which he had slept as a child, whenever his father gave him the privilege of a visit to his uncle's home. The little old mantelpiece seemed so warped and tiny compared to former days, when the magnifying eyes of his youth made it so formidable. The same little holy pictures still hung upon the wall; and how he used to wonder, while lying in bed with the candle still burning on the shelf, what could be the meaning of those quaint figures! It all came back to him, as he lay there looking about the room, coaxing up the tender memories of childhood, until the feeling of sleep suddenly drew the curtain over the reality, and lifted the gates of dreamland.

The morning was bright and cheerful when he awoke from his refreshing sleep, although the air was a trifle chilled, bearing the smell of the distant ocean. After breakfast he strolled up the lane to call on the parish priest who had taken such an interest in his mother and himself. He found the good old man just returned from a walk, and was received with the greatest kindness by him, who was more than delighted to find that the son had been received into the church of the parents. Together the two strolled over to the lawyer's office, where the necessary papers were signed in the settlement of the inheritance, causing Lanning to feel that he could now face the world with the assurance of having a fairly good start.

The same afternoon Ned bethought himself of his promise to call down at Clonmel to see the brother of Mrs. Mellody, and accordingly secured one of those little vehicles so closely related in the affairs of the Irish traveler, a jaunting car. The ride was a great treat to Ned, extending as it did over the most attractive portion of the road, which was about twelve miles in length.

He did not need to repeat Mrs. Mellody's name when he walked into a small cobbler's shop and found Johnny Ryan. Tools and shoes flew in all directions as soon as he mentioned his friend's name, while the grasp of the cobbler's hand was violent enough to make Lanning wince.

"So you're Bob Lanning's boy come back from America—and you don't mean to tell me that you are living with my sister, Mary, ever since you went there?"

"That's just what brought me over from Cashel, Mr. Ryan," said Ned, laughing at his surprise. "Your sister

is the best friend I have in the world, and I don't think I'd be where I am today only for her."

"It's a shame to ask you to sit down here in this dirty shop, but I am crazy to talk to you." With that he walked over and turned the key in the door, so as to have the visitor all to himself. Lanning laughed at his precautions, and accepted the improvised seat, waiting for the inquisitor to begin action.

"Now tell me, for the love of heaven—what is your first name? I don't like the 'Mister' part of it."

"Call me Ned, if you please; I like it better myself. Yours, I believe, is John."

"For the love of heaven, Ned, tell me something about Mary. I was beginning to think she left the world entirely. Is she happy, and did she marry well—what kind is her husband."

"The Mellodys are the finest couple in the country, John, and you have every reason to be proud of your sister. We have the happiest kind of a home over there, and I would not give it up for the castles of the lords over here. I have been living with them now about three years this summer. Her husband is the finest old gentleman you could want to meet."

"Well, I'm delighted to hear you say it, Ned. She always used to tell me that in her letters, but you know the women folks, how they would never give in to a thing if they once took the notion. But tell me, are they well off—I mean, have they lots of money?"

"I will answer the first question and say that they are the most contented couple in New York. As for wealth, and you know that does not always insure contentment,

I think they are comfortable without having any to spare. By the way, I have a little parcel your sister sent over for you—I was almost forgetting it."

Lanning handed over the little square package, saying: "She told me that it was not very much, but she knew you would be glad that she remembered you." The happy John was uncovering the parcel while Lanning was talking, and on opening it discovered a box of highly decorated cigars. In an instant Ned recognized a box just like the one the good woman had presented to the house at Christmas time. Not caring to spoil the thoughtful little gift, he accepted one of the proffered treasures, and choking down the memory of Mr. Mellody's action at the famous breakfast, he placed the cigar in his pocket, with the excuse of using it on the journey home.

"Ah, I knew she would not forget her brother, an' I've been hoping to have a few of these American cigars to see how they taste. I hear so much about the tobacco from there."

The smoke of his lighted cigar was curling slowly up to the ceiling of the shop, while he went on: "What chances are there in the United States for a cobbler like me, Ned? I do believe that it must be a fine country for making money."

"That I don't know; but I will tell you this much—that you have to work mighty hard to get the American dollar. You own this shop, don't you, John, and you have a fairly good income from your work—by that I mean that you don't need to worry very much about making ends meet? Well, if you want advice, take mine, and don't go across."

"Now that's strange, and I hearing so much about what grand chances there are over there to take in the money. The papers and the people over here are filled with the thoughts of America. I want you to give me your honest opinion about it."

"Well, for a man who wants to be experimenting all the time, and knocking about tinkering, I would not take the trouble to keep him from going to China. But for the man who can make a comfortable living in Ireland I would advise him to stay in the land he can call his home. Advertising and paper talk does not make a country. A dollar means just as much over there as it does here, and if you only had the chances that I have had to see the discontent that is rising among the laboring people over there, you would not think so much of the golden opportunities you hear about."

Lanning noted the cobbler frowning every now and then, and smelling the cigar he was smoking, taking it from his mouth at intervals, to take another whiff at it. "You certainly seem to know something about it, Lanning, and it makes me feel good to think that I am not the worst off in the world. I've got my little family here, and we are well and happy, and although I have no fat purse, I think the Lord has been very good to me."

"That's the way I like to hear a man talk. John, the whole secret of contentment, in my notion, is to make the most of what we have and not let our craving for riches take the sweetness out of the loaf of our present happiness."

Here John, no longer able to stand the taste and smell of the American product he was smoking, sniffed the air and said: "I do believe this cigar is not so much, after

all; it smells like a piece of old twine, such as comes with the hides of leather I use. Now don't you think the smell strange?"

Lanning, with a half-suppressed smile, admitted that it was not very pleasant, and remarked: "That is a good illustration of what I was just telling you about everything American being first class. It will be first class whenever you are willing to pay a first-class price. But I must tell you about those cigars. Christmas morning, when we were all at breakfast, Mrs. Mellody sprung a surprise on the house by bringing in a box just like that. We tried them with about the same conclusion as yourself. Her husband managed to send her out to the kitchen, while he passed around a better brand before she came in again. We praised her taste so highly in the selection of the cigars, I suppose she thought it was just the kind that would suit you. The trouble is that she paid her innocent money for the paper wrappers, not minding what kind of tobacco was in them."

John burst out with a roar of laughter at the story of the good joke on his sister, and said: "I've got it. I'll give them to some of the peelers who come in here to take up my time. If that doesn't cure them, then I'll give up. But you must not forget to tell Mary how well I liked them. It was thoughtful of the poor soul to remember her brother, and I would not have her think I did not like her present."

For several hours the cobbler kept the lock on his door, chatting away with his prisoner, going over the history of the Ryan family and the Lanning family, until Ned had to beg him to be permitted to go, which favor was granted only after a promise to come back the next

day, which was far from the visitor's mind. Mrs. Mellody had not erred in the description of her brother, and Ned was glad to be let off so easily, relieved at heart that he had satisfied that sacred obligation.

Once back at his uncle's home in Cashel, he settled down in front of the cheerful turf-fire, and enjoyed the reveries of the novel situation in which he found himself. In the course of the conversation he asked his uncle the state of financial affairs in the home, to which the uncle responded: "Oh, I guess we have no reason to grumble; the Lord has been kind to us. I've got fifty pounds or so to pay on the house, but that won't be much if the times don't go back on us. But tell me, Ned, how are your own affairs—I mean the question of your religion? Are you still of your mother's mind, as you used to be?"

"No, uncle, I have been blessed in that regard, and I made my first communion last Christmas. I'm going to tell you something, but don't let on in the town that you ever knew anything about it. Mother was received into the Catholic church before she died."

"Thanks be to God!" solemnly answered the amazed uncle. "I'm glad, my boy, I'm more than delighted at the news. May God give her an eternal rest. I always felt sorry for you, boy, when I thought you would be going out into the world without the blessings of religion. I trembled for you, knowing you were not ready for the battles of life. But God was good, and you're safe, after all."

"That was the only flaw in the moulding of my character as a child, and it was not many years after I began to exist independently of my parents that I came to the

test which showed me where the flaw was; although I did not really give it serious thought until later in my career. Now, I want to ask a very great favor of you, and I know you won't refuse me."

"Go right ahead, boy. I wouldn't refuse you anything, except what I would be sure would not be good for you."

"The favor I want to ask is this: I am going to leave here tomorrow——"

"Now don't be telling me that; you won't stir out of the city of Cashel for the next month. The only reason I would let you leave us would be, when I found out that you were not pleased with our humble fare."

"It's not that, but I have only a month's leave from my position in New York, and I must be back. But what I was about to ask you is this: I'll leave one hundred pounds here with you, and I want you to see that there is a small Celtic cross placed to mark the spot of my mother's grave, but I don't want to spend any more than fifty for it, do you understand? I want you to arrange with the priest for the removal of her body to the Catholic cemetery, and if you can do that quietly for me, you'll never be sorry."

"Well, now, I'll do that, Neddy, and I'm only too glad to help the son of my brother. I suppose you will want her placed beside your father. But tell me, what am I to do with the fifty pounds left over?"

"Put that in your own little home, and take the finger of debt off it. My uncle has left me a few hundred pounds and I won't miss what little I leave to you."

"God bless you, boy, and may He spare you for many a day."

The parting of the evening filled Ned's heart to overflowing, as he was forced to listen to the loving wishes, and muttered supplications to God for his welfare. It is with a meaning that they shook his hand and expressed, each in his own peculiarly affectionate way the soulful sentiments for a "Safe home," or a "God be with you."

Thus is it with those simple, God-fearing people, and thus will it always be in a land where you can be assured that the hand acts in harmony with the heart. So long as the faith for which they fought and died remains in those hearts, so long will the Irish people retain their ideal of true friendship and hospitality.

The next morning the hero of our story cast a last glance on the city of his birth, and boarded the train for Queenstown, where he embarked for the land of his adoption, picturing in his mind the reception awaiting him in the Mellody home. As the last glimpse of Irish soil faded from his view, he settled back in his steamer chair, musing over the strange events of the past few weeks. If he had now settled the accounts of the best part of his life, with what success would he face the indefinite future? There had been a flaw in the moulding of his youth; would the mature man, by a courageous effort, attain the requisite standard from which he was retarded in youth by the parental marriage?

CHAPTER XVI.

BOB LARMON'S LAST TRIP.

LIFE IN THE MELLODY home was anything but boisterous during the absence of the two boarders, as the time seemed to roll on with the most monotonous regularity, devoid as the days were, of any unusual interruption. The place being deserted from breakfast to supper-hour by the father and daughter, the mistress of the house turned her attention to the neighbors, whose company she sought in the very dull moments.

Bundling up a little parcel of sewing she always carried with her on her calls, and making sure that she had on some remarkable item of dress which she knew could not be in possession of her intended hostess, and with a final nod at herself in the hall-tree glass, she ventured out one afternoon, waiting until some poky pedestrian would pass, before hiding the front door key under the steps, as if the whole block didn't know the very spot for years. The Lenten season was fast approaching, and in consequence Mrs. Mellody was making the rounds, as she used to say, leaving us to suppose that she denied herself that privilege during the penitential period.

Mrs. Stanton was one of those quiet, unpretentious neighbors, posing as a model of all the virtues in the

calendar, with a few of her own manufacture thrown in. When I say that she was unpretentious, I mean that she did not advertise her good points so much in word as she did in her actions, lifting her eyebrows in matronly horror at the mention of some little fault of a less educated neighbor, but never a word out of her, except (and the habit of excepting gave her a certain virtuous prestige over a few of her unsuspecting friends), except, as I was going to say, only when a very, very intimate caller, or one whom she considered equally as prudent as herself, came in for a chat. The two would then settle down as a committee having the welfare of the neighborhood at heart, opening negotiations in the following way: "Now, I would not have this known for the world, but I know you so well that it would be just between yourself and myself."

In Mrs. Stanton's mind Mary Mellody was a good, innocent creature, who was not sharp enough to be admitted to one of the secret committees of two, while that same innocence made her an easy victim for the information seeker, and therefore she could not be overlooked.

It was with a certain sense of pleasure that Susan Stanton saw her neighbor come in for an afternoon's visit, addressing her thus: "Well, if it isn't Mary Mellody. If you ain't the house-body, to be waiting till now to come over to see me. It's just last night I was speaking of you."

"How do you do, Mrs. Stanton," from the visitor; "I know I ought to be ashamed of myself for not coming over sooner, but you know I'm killed with the work." There was the slightest trace of chill in the

reception of Mrs. Stanton, and the caller was not slow to notice it, letting it pass as so much ammunition for a future occasion.

The two settled comfortably in the parlor, using their sewing as a welcome distraction to give more time for thought. "How's John and Eileen? What a fine lady your girl is becoming of late! I see her as she passes on her way to work every morning, and she's developing so fast, I hardly am sure of my eyes."

"Yes, Eileen is the good girl, and I'm proud of her; and you know she's such a help now when I need her so much."

"Oh, you mustn't ever let on you are getting old, Mary; people will begin to talk about you, and they won't call to see you as often."

"Well, Susan," responded the visitor, with a laugh that was only half-hearted, "I never said such a thing. I merely said that I have a great deal to do, and that because I have three to cook for every day now, and it's glad I am to have Eileen to help me."

"I understand that one of your boarders has left the country. I am afraid I must tell you a little whisper that I came across. I know you should hear it, but I don't believe one word of it myself. They say that he left because the law was after him for making trouble as one of them bad men down on Market street. The reason I did not believe it was because you would never let one of those people board in your house."

"Well, of all the talk people do have; doesn't it beat the mischief! That's one of the finest young men in the city, Susan, and he comes of good Irish parents. If I

knew the one who had nothing else to do but talk about the members of my family I'd give her a piece of my mind."

"Well, Mary, it was only a tiny whisper, so don't mind. What do you think of the new family that moved into Mr. White's house a few days ago? I wonder where they came from."

"You don't tell me, Susan—and the house right across the way from me, and I never saw them moving in!"

"I was thinking maybe you knew them, Mary. They were taking in the furniture just as I was standing on the porch, and do you know, they had only one or two nice pieces in the whole lot. I'm afraid there's not much style about them. I took peculiar notice of the old piano; it was all scratched up, and, you know, some people think that when they have a piano, that they don't need to care what the rest of the furniture is. I saw three big washtubs going in, and you can be sure they must have to do their own washing; and as for dishes, I never saw the like." Here she heaved a sigh of indignant disappointment and said: "I 'resume' that society here won't waste much time on the likes of them."

"Well, Susan, I have to do my own washing, and I won't say anything about what the poor creatures have, because I don't know; and what's more, I never remember what I don't know."

"Oh, but you're getting awful good lately, Mrs. Mellody," put in the surprised Susan, with emphasis on the "Mrs." "I was only trying to tell you what I saw, and I don't know any more about them than you do. You

weren't always so 'parculiar' about standing up for your neighbors, but I am glad you are becoming sensible, like myself."

"I did not think you would scold me for trying to guard my tongue, Mrs. Stanton. There is one promise I am going to make for Lent, and that is, not to talk about my neighbors."

The cloud of indignation was here beginning to gather in the horizon, while Mrs. Stanton replied: "I hope you are not accusing me of talking about my neighbors; I have something else to do besides gossiping all the time, and, what's more, I don't want the likes of you preaching to me."

Before the wrathful Mrs. Mellody could get in a word the now angry Susan continued: "And I don't be giving others' presents away for Christmas. Mrs. Charles showed me the very apron I made for you, and it's foolish I was to be giving nice things to you when you don't know silk from calico."

During this tirade Mrs. Mellody had gathered up her sewing and was standing with her hand on the doorknob. With half a sob she replied: "Is it the likes of you, Mrs. Stanton, that's telling a Mellody how to be decent? If you thought that rag of an apron was nice, you were wrong entirely. I felt ashamed to be forced to give it to Mrs. Charles, but I did not have time to make something decent for the poor woman. I'm vexed, I am, an' I coming here intending to hold my tongue, but sure I knew by the head of you when you met me at the door that I was not welcome." Her last words were lost in the slam of the door, as she rushed out of the house. When she

reached home she sat down and found relief in a flood of indignant tears.

Such was the result of her neighborly excursion, and she vowed in her heart that she would stay at home in the future, even if she died of "lonesomeness." There she sat, going over all the things she should have said when she had the chance, rehearsing the whole tragedy with a few additional imaginary victories for herself.

In the evening, when John came home for supper, she repeated the event of the day, crying between spells of the soulful narrative. Instead of the sympathy she longed for, the husband burst into a hearty roar. "I knew it, Mary. I knew you would meet your match some day. So she saw the apron, did she? Well, if that doesn't beat all!" Another laugh here interrupted his broken words, until he saw that he was teasing his wife too much for the peace of the family, and said: "Ah, now, Mary, don't take it so hard; it was a little mistake to give the apron away; so, since she found it out, there's nothing to do but own up to it."

"But, John, dear, it would not do for her to scold me, she must be talking about Mr. Lanning behind his back. I was willing to hold my temper till she told me that I did not know the difference between calico and silk, and then for me to be sitting there, looking at the fine dress on herself. I will be real mad at her for I don't know how long. I may forgive her if she asks my pardon."

"Oh, mother," interrupted the daughter, who had remained silent thus far, "you know that you must forgive her. Don't you think it would be awful nice for you to steal over quietly some day and tell her you are

sorry for what you said to her. You know Lent will soon be here, and you could not perform a better penance to begin with."

"Is it you, child, that's asking your mother to go over to that house and belittle the whole Mellody family. I'm ashamed—but sure, maybe you are right, after all, and my temper got the better of me. It is not often I let it get away from me without good reason. Well, I'll see what I'll do after thinking it over for a few days."

"Mother, you forgot to tell me if a letter came for me today. I haven't heard from Bob in such an awful long time."

"Yes, Eileen, darling, and I don't see how I did forget about it, and I know by the handwriting it is from Bobby." She went out to the kitchen and returned with the letter.

"It makes me feel good to hear from him, mother; I'm so anxious for him to come home, so I can tell him the little secret I spoke about this morning. Father doesn't know about it, does he, mother?"

"No, child, I don't think we have told him yet," answered the mother, looking at her husband as though she feared to let him into the confidence for a while yet.

"Will I tell him, mother?" questioned Eileen.

"Why, yes, daughter, you can tell him, because he must know it sooner or later."

Eileen, with the unopened letter in her hand, looked teasingly at her father, wondering in her mind whether he would be pleased or displeased.

"Father, I'm going to marry Bob when he comes home this time."

"What's that you say?" asked John, with his eyes open to their limit, "you, child, talking so soon about marriage. Sure, I did not think you knew the meaning of that word, and I don't think you ever will know it, even though you live as long as your mother and myself." Here a serious frown spread over his kindly old face as he said: "You're not thinking of leaving us, already, child? I don't know how I can let anyone take you from us."

"Arrah, John, don't be going on like that. The child's old enough to know her own mind, and she's only telling you what may happen some of these days. She's not gone yet," interrupted the wife.

"It may not be news to you, wife, but it is to me. Besides, I never gave it a thought. I've had it in my head that Eileen was to be always with us, and I never sat long enough to think that one of these days she would be a full-grown woman."

"That's the way with you men, you are always thinking of yourselves and your own comfort. And were you so thoughtful when I was to marry you? Sure, you snapped me off before I could kiss my own mother good-by, and left half of my wedding presents after me."

Eileen, who had meanwhile opened the letter and left her parents to settle their little love spat between themselves, settled down to enjoy the contents of the long-looked-for message. There were only a few lines, and her eye took their contents in with a glance. Before the parents were well aware of it, the girl burst into tears, sobbing as though her heart would break. The mother, surprised at the sudden show of emotion,

picked up the letter and saw the cause of her daughter's weeping. Turning to the husband, she said, herself on the verge of tears:

"Glory be to God, John, Bob is dying in a hospital in Baltimore. That's the sad news we have this blessed night, and to think that we can't be near the poor boy." With these bitter words the mother joined the sobbing girl, while John fingered the letter clumsily, trying to make out the badly scribbled lines. The letter read as follows:

John Hopkins Hospital,
Baltimore, Md.

Dear Eileen: I have been trying to fight against typhoid fever for the last few weeks, and I did not let you know because I thought I would get well without making you worry. The doctors have given me up, and I wanted to get this last word to you before I became unable to write. Don't you worry, dear girl, for me, because I know I would not deserve to hear the word you promised me when I would get home. If I die, I want to ask the last favor of being buried from the good old Mellody home, where I know I will have good friends to pray for me. I will write again tomorrow.

Ask mother and father to pray for me, and I know you, Eileen, will not forget YOUR BOB.

The father, on learning the contents of the simple letter, sat looking sadly into space ahead of him, knowing that he could say nothing to console the others. His good old heart filled up and it was with difficulty he restrained a tear. The news could not have pro-

duced a more mournful effect if it had come from his own son, so closely was Bob bound in the hearts of those simple people.

The father moved around to where Eileen lay, with her head resting on the table, and, placing a trembling hand softly on her hair, said in a faltering voice: "Come, now, come, now, child, don't take on so; the news might be worse. People don't always die of that sickness, and I'm sure we will get another letter tomorrow telling us he is getting better."

"I know you want to make me feel better about it, but I just can't help thinking of how far away he is, father. Oh, if I could only see him once before he dies——" the thought of death forced the tears once more to her eyes, and the father left her side to go and sit in the darkness of the front parlor.

The thought of death produces a strange effect on some persons, leaving them speechless and without a sign of sorrow other than an oppressive feeling of silent meditation. Old John Mellody was one of these. He had a faint suspicion of the truth, in thinking that Bob's case was worse, even, than the letter would imply, although he did not mention it to the women folks.

The truth of the matter was, that the letter had been written some time before the date of sending, and it was posted only at the last moment, when the patient was too weak to use the pen. The young fellow was on the last stage of his journey, and was planning on reaching New York in a few days just after he was taken down with the fever. The hope of recovering his health and the dread of causing his dear friends

any unnecessary worry, induced him to keep them in ignorance of his misfortune. For weeks he lay stretched on the hard bed, patiently waiting until the exhausting fever would run its course and finally liberate him from its chafing bonds. In the stages of his delirium the attendants were reminded frequently of names of the members of the little home in which he found his only pleasure in life. For days he fought bravely against the ravages of the torture, but he soon began to see that his condition was serious. It was then that he penned the note to Eileen, only with the greatest effort. From day to day he kept it safely under his pillow, listening patiently for the word that would mean life or death to him.

It came one night just when he was thinking that his strength was returning to him. The poor fellow had opened out before him the little message intended for Eileen, together with a crude will, leaving what few belongings he had to her care, and was just brightening up with the hope of having no further need of sending the letter, when he was suddenly taken with another attack of weakness, and before the nurse was well aware of it, Bob Larmon was dead. He had made the last trip, which ended, not as he was expecting, in the bosom of the Mellody home, but, let us hope, in the kingdom of heaven. There he lay with his marble countenance reflecting that look of eternal peace which death stamps on the features of God's faithful. It was with no empty meaning that the attending priest remarked casually to the nurse at the door of the sick room, "A good young man."

The letter which was expected in the Mellody home on the following day became a telegram, bearing the sad tidings of an event which was to cast a heavy cloud over the cheerfulness of only one family in the crowded city of New York. The body arrived the same afternoon, and the scene which met it in the Mellody home can best be described by silence.

It nearly broke the heart of Mrs. Mellody to see on the breast of the dead body the little scapular she had given him to wear before he left the house for the last time, and which some kindly hand had not forgotten to place on the corpse. The night was spent in prayer and silent thought. There were no neighbors, no friends or relatives other than those three good people to mourn and pray for the soul of a simple American drummer, whose life created no new empire, but lacked not the pearls of unassuming merit. In the silence of that long night those good Irish folk assailed the throne of God for a merciful reception of the soul of their orphan boarder.

The following morning, at an early hour, the little funeral wended its way through the noisy streets of the city, nor did it interfere in the least with passing traffic, consisting as it did of only two vehicles, the hearse and one solitary carriage. The Mass was sung by Father Kennedy, the only one outside of the Mellodys who could be called a friend of Bob Larmon. At the grave a most touching and tender tribute of love and sorrow was paid to the deceased in the way of a huge wreath of flowers, the gift of two simple scrub women who worked for the firm with which Bob was connected as a traveling man.

During the absence of the family at the funeral, a traveler made his way up the steps of the Mellody home. It was none other than Ned Lanning, just returned from his eventful trip. It was with a sigh of relief that he deposited his baggage on the floor of the porch, and hoping to surprise the family without rapping on the door, he attempted to walk in quietly. What was his disappointment on finding the door fastened. His only resort now was to ring the door bell, which method he soon gave over for the more emphatic plan of knocking. After waiting in vain for a response, it finally dawned upon him that there was no one at home. Fortunately, he found the door in the rear unlocked, and through this he entered the house.

As he passed from room to room everything seemed so pleasantly familiar to him, recalling the many happy moments of previous days. He was passing through the parlor on his way to his room, when he stood as if petrified at the sight which met his eyes. There in the center of the room stood a set of candelabra, plainly showing that death had been a visitor in the home within the last few days.

The reader can scarcely imagine the sentiments of painful uncertainty that took possession of Lanning's heart. The awful silence of the situation, linked with the undeniable evidence that death had entered that happy little home, held the traveler spellbound in the middle of the room. "Who can it be," thought he, "who has been called to the presence of God? This suspense is awful; the neighbors may be able to inform me."

Leaving his baggage on the parlor floor, where he suddenly dropped it on entering, he rushed from the room, intending to learn from the family in the next house, who had been the victim of death. In his hurry he had forgotten that the front door was locked until he tried to open it. In his anxiety to leave the house he was about to raise one of the windows opening on the front porch, when he noticed a carriage stop in front of the door. Hastily drawing back in the shadow of the curtains, Lanning stood there watching that little vehicle which he felt enclosed those who were dear to him.

With staring eyes Ned watched the clumsy driver slowly descend from his place to open the door for the occupants. Dumb with fear he waited anxiously to see which member of the family would fail to appear in that little darkened doorway, feeling that the missing one must be in the grave. Mr. Mellody was the first to step out of the carriage, and was followed in a few moments by the mother and daughter. In his joy on seeing them all safe Ned gave himself over to no further conjectures, believing that some distant relative of the family had died.

It seemed an age before he heard the key grating in the door, while with a sigh of relief he threw himself into a chair beside him. In a moment the mourners entered, and the first to see the silent visitor was Mrs. Mellody, who could scarcely believe that it was other than an apparition she saw before her. In a moment she pressed her motherly lips to his forehead, weeping bitterly.

It was with some difficulty that Lanning learned, between heart-broken sobs, the cause of their sadness, and it was with more difficulty that he refrained from weeping with them. Mr. Mellody tried to induce the two women to take a rest after their long vigil of the previous night, but it was of no use, except in the daughter's case, who yielded to the persuasion of her mother. The parents, after removing their wraps, sat in the parlor, where Mrs. Mellody began, "Arrah, Neddy, it's a sad welcome we have for you after being away from us so long. You don't know how glad we are to see you, but, sure, we can't show it with poor Bobby dead and buried this blessed day."

"Now, Mrs. Mellody, don't be thinking of me in this sad moment. You look all tired out, and you ought to lie down for a little while. It makes me feel worse than I can tell you to think I came just too late to accompany him to the grave, and I had been planning on seeing him alive and well here when I came back."

"I know, Neddy, that you feel terrible, and the Lord knows we all deserve to be in his place, and he alive instead. It nearly kills me to think that the poor boy died so far from home, with none of us to help him. The Lord be merciful to us all this day; death is a terrible thing, and it's the likes of me that gets the second chance."

"Come now, Mary," interrupted the husband, "let's not do any more talking about it; prayer is what the poor boy needs now. You go and fix up a little lunch for the whole of us, and Ned and myself will sit here till it's ready. You won't feel so bad while you are making the tea. Come now, Mary, that's the good

wife, do as I'm telling you; I'm sure Mr. Lanning is starved after coming so far." With that he took her by the arm and led her out to the kitchen, knowing that the little distraction would help to dry her eyes.

"Neddy, my boy," said he when he came back, "it's a hard blow for us all to lose the poor boy, but the Lord knows what is best, and it's wrong for us to grumble. Poor Eileen is worn out entirely, the creature, and it fills my hard old heart full up to see her crying her eyes out. I don't think she'll be the same girl for a long time. I want to ask you, Neddy, to do what you can to cheer her up and try to make her forget her sorrow, because I know she won't listen to me or her mother." Here the old father, afraid of his own tears, turned his eyes to the far corner of the room, not daring to look at Lanning.

"I'll do what I can, Mr. Mellody, but I am afraid I could not trust myself to broach the subject for a few days. She needs a good long rest, and if you had any relatives to whom you could send her for a short visit, she might be able to brighten up in a short while."

"That would be a good plan, and I think I will speak to Mary about it. It makes me feel bad to be troubling you, talking about these things, just when we should be glad to see you back with us. It's a poor word of welcome we have for you, boy, but we'll make up for it some day."

"Please don't mention such a thing, Mr. Mellody; it hurts me to hear you talk as if you did not consider me Bob's friend. How selfish it would be for me to expect you to dry your tears to make me feel welcome, when I know you all are doing everything pos-

sible to make me feel at home. This is the only home I have in the world, Mr. Mellody, and I would not give it up for the finest in the city."

"It's glad I am to hear you say it, Ned, and I know you understand us poor folks."

Mrs. Mellody, who had spent her time between weeping and making the tea, now came in and asked them to come to the table. When the three were seated, the father said, "Now, Mary, we mustn't say another word in the house about Bob, for Eileen's sake, because the child is sick from crying. We must try to make her forget her sorrow as soon as we can; so I don't want to see the sign of a tear from you, although I know you feel as bad as anyone. Don't you think that'll be the best, Mary?"

"Well, John, I'll try to do the best I can, but sometimes I can't help myself. We won't say another word to the child."

Lanning kept out of the way as much as possible all that evening, busying himself in arranging his room and preparing for his return to work at the dock. The few little presents he had brought from Ireland were placed carefully in his trunk, to be brought out at a brighter moment.

There were very few incidents to disturb the life into which the Mellody family now entered, and it was only after the longest time that the usual good humor began to make its appearance once more. It was just about three weeks after Bob's death when Mrs. Mellody was one day sitting alone in the house, thinking over the events of the past. Suddenly dropping the sewing with which she was occupied, she stood up

with a sudden resolution depicted on her kindly face. In a few moments she was going out the front door, dressed in her usual poke bonnet and shawl, finished off with the immaculate white apron.

The neighborhood, no doubt, well aware of the result of the last visit, was more than surprised to see her make her way up the steps of Mrs. Stanton's home. The door was opened by that benevolent personage, whose eyes betrayed their amazement, while her countenance became somewhat rigid, not knowing what to make of the caller's action after her dramatic departure some weeks before. Mrs. Mellody was the first to speak.

"How do you do, Mrs. Stanton!" This came in a very meek voice. "I came over to tell you how sorry I was for that little happening the other day. It was entirely wrong for me to flare up as I did, and my conscience was troubling me ever since."

The lady of the house had kept the visitor standing in the doorway during this first sally, not wishing to endanger her dignity by making the advance of asking her into the house. It was only when the surprise of Mrs. Mellody's remark left her that the amazed Susan bethought herself that her own attitude was not what it should be. The thought of the neighbors watching them made her seize the caller by the shawl and pull her gently into the hall, closing the door against prying eyes. She took Mrs. Mellody in her arms and kissed her, saying, "Why, Mary, dear, how delighted I am to see you. I was sure you would never call to see me again. I'm sorry you got such a wrong impression of me the last time you called. We all make mistakes sometimes, and I should have remembered

how sensitive you are." The veiled accusation of weakness made Mrs. Mellody wince, but she did not show it in her manner.

"Susy, I know I'm not prudent, and I'm going to watch my tongue after this. I felt so bad to be all this time without speaking to you, but when I thought everything over, I just had to come back here and ask you to forgive me."

"Sometimes it is hard for us women to keep a civil tongue in our heads, but I hope we will be the best of friends all the time now, Mary." The two sat down over a little cup of tea, and patched up the old wounds, each in her own peculiar way. There was only one thing which Mrs. Mellody noticed, and that was that her penitent friend always was very careful about admitting her own shortcomings, leaving the impression that the visitor was the only unfortunate one who had any failings, while the hostess herself posed as offended innocence, deigning to forgive the mistake of the visitor.

As Mrs. Mellody was leaving the house, her reconciled friend handed her a small spool of white thread, saying: "This belongs to you, dear, because you left it the last time we had our little friendly spat. I remember you dropped it just as you were going out the door, and I had to smile the way it dragged after you, with the end of it caught in your work. There was a line of thread half way down the block, and I said to myself, 'It looks like poor Mary was too good a neighbor to get away without some little line to bring her back to me.' "

This last little sally at friendly humor touched the heart of the departing guest, and she said, "Susy, you have a good heart, and I'll promise never to say a single word again to vex you. Good-by, now, and come over to see me some afternoon." With a kiss that was a little formal in its manufacture, the two parted, with a sense of acquired virtue, each taking to herself the honor of bringing about the reconciliation. Mrs. Mellody walked along as though she had at last reached that state of perfection which was required for the proper observance of Lent, and it was with a cheerful heart she set about the work of preparing the supper when she reached home.

There was one resolve which she made as a result of the call on her neighbor, and that she expressed aloud, as was her custom when her heart was agitated and no one around, "I'll never give away another present that I have received." Then for a time she paused, and finally said, "At least without making it over three or four times."

CHAPTER XVII.

FINANCIAL CONFIDENCE.

EILEEN MELLODY had of late been more cheerful, and in consequence she was taking on that healthy charm and comeliness which the finger of sorrow had caused her to lose. The happy moments came with more frequency and time was slowly reconciling her to the dark shadow of the past. She did not, however, succeed in entirely forgetting the event of Bob's death, nor did she desire to do so; but the return of her endangered health made her more susceptible to the cheerful efforts of those around her. Lanning's presence, though not objectionable, always tended to remind her of her great loss, and for this reason she could enjoy his company in the presence of others only.

Lanning, on his part, treated her with the greatest consideration, arranging little pastimes and visits which he knew she would appreciate. Little by little Ned began to take the place of poor Bob in the privilege of walking out on the Sunday afternoons, and in going to and from church. No matter how often he found himself in Eileen's company, he always noted the strange barrier she held up before him, which even her girlish manner could not conceal. Even in her "Thank you, Mr. Lanning," there was a strange for-

mality which in former days was not present. If there was one thing of which he was certain that was that he loved Eileen Mellody, and had loved her from the time he first found himself in the Mellody home.

One year had now elapsed since Bob's death, and the days came and went with unbroken regularity, offering nothing of an eventful nature to disturb the happiness of the Mellody family. The little mortgage on the home was lifted from the shoulders of the father, who for the first time in years began to feel the independence of being a man of means. The little savings which Bob left in the care of Eileen had played an important part in bringing about this state of parental bliss.

As for Lanning, there was nothing like the feeling of confidence which now took possession of him, knowing that he was well prepared for the future in having no ordinary fortune laid up in the bank. It was not with indifference that he looked on some cozy little home, as he passed through the streets of New York, knowing that a property investment would not be the worst way of spending his inheritance. It was not without some reason that his fellow workers began to call him "Lucky Ned," knowing as they did that he could sign his name to a very substantial check.

Ned, in fact, had about twelve thousand dollars to his credit, and the cares of the world did not weigh very heavily upon his shoulders. There was many an occasion calling for a helping hand, nor was he reluctant in doing his share. His name was usually at the head of the list whenever the call for help came from one of the dock laborers, always handing over

his pay envelope unopened to the one in charge of the charitable funds, not ostentatiously, but in a manner unassuming and quiet, savoring of no sentimental show.

One evening, after his work, he was sitting in the front room with Eileen, chatting away on the news of the day, for want of other topics, when he said: "This evening, when I was coming home on the car, Eileen, I was thinking of what I could do with some of the money I have in the bank. I want to ask your advice in the matter, as I don't know the first thing about how to invest it."

"Well, Mr. Lanning," said she, laughing, "I do not know any more than you do about such things. Perhaps father could help you come to some decision. I remember you told me you had received a small fortune from your uncle while you were in Ireland, but I never heard you say how much it was."

"At present I have about twelve thousand dollars to blow in, and I don't know how to do it, unless I begin to build a library with my name over the door."

"Oh, my, Mr. Lanning, you are rich indeed!" said Eileen with unfeigned surprise. "I never thought we had such a rich boarder in our family. You never pretended but that you had only your week's salary. What are you going to do with all that money?"

"That is just what I want to know, and I thought you would be able to advise me. I was thinking seriously of buying a little home somewhere, because I don't imagine I will always be a boarder."

"That would be splendid, Mr. Lanning, and I am

sure it would be the best use to which you could put it. You will need a little home some day when you are married."

"But, Eileen, it seems as though my chances for marriage were not very bright. I do not mix enough with society, and I know only one or two young ladies. The trouble with me is that I am too serious for such company. It may be that I am a little too stiff and self-conscious to make the best kind of a companion for a wife, but I will wait until I see what the future has in store for me."

"Oh, Mr. Lanning, I never heard you talk so cruelly of yourself. I will help you to become better acquainted in the city, and you will see what nice people we have around here. I think you are very prudent to provide for the future."

"Well, Eileen, I want you to come out some Sunday and see a little cottage I have in mind. I am afraid that I am a poor judge of a good piece of property, but even if I were, two heads are better than one."

A call from the kitchen here interrupted the conversation, and Ned was left alone, where he sat at the piano, drumming softly on the keys. Knowing that his companion would be occupied for some time, Ned went up to his room. It was with some care he locked the door after him, and walked over to his clothes closet, which he always kept under key. Noting that the blinds were all drawn, and hoping that he would not be disturbed, he drew from the inner darkness a covered frame. It was nothing other than an unfinished painting of "The Immaculate Conception," on which

he had been working secretly for some time, intending it for his good friend, Mrs. Mellody, as a present on the occasion of her approaching wedding anniversary.

One afternoon, while Ned and Eileen were strolling along through the shadows of Central Park, feeling that the world had many little pleasures, Lanning suddenly remarked: "Eileen, do you remember my speaking to you some time ago about the money I have in the bank? Well, I have at last decided to use it in the way I told you; that is, in securing a nice little home. If you don't mind, we can walk over to see it, as it is only a few blocks from here."

"Yes, Mr. Lanning, let us go over and see it. I want to see how tasty you are in your selection. It cannot be very far away from the park, and that is one thing I should like about it. How much is the owner asking for it?"

"The price is nine thousand dollars, but I think I will be able to do a little better when he finds that I can pay cash."

The two walked along in silence, save for a word now and then, until they stopped in front of a little house, to which Ned pointed as the object of his desire. "My, what a pretty little house; it looks more like a little spot in the country than a place in the heart of a big city. I must congratulate you on your taste. There is one thing I like very much about the place, and that is the wide lot on which it stands. It would be just an ideal spot for a little garden; I like gardening ever so much."

"Do you, Eileen? Well, if that's the case, the place is going to be mine, because I am so much in need of

a gardener." Lanning looked intently at the girl to see the effect of his words, while Eileen sought to hide the slightest trace of a blush by looking after a passing carriage.

"But, Mr. Lanning, I don't know the first principles of gardening, and I am afraid I should not command a very big salary. How foolish it would be for you to buy the place simply because it would enable you to employ a gardener."

They continued on their way, lest people should notice their staring at the house in question, and Lanning ventured to answer: "It may not appear so foolish when it could be possible that the gardener would be worth more to me than a whole block of such houses. I am sure the owner will find a very willing buyer in me if he ever finds out that the place is so pleasing to one on whose judgment I depend so much."

The veiled compliments in the conversation went apparently unnoticed by Eileen, but inwardly her heart fluttered at the revelation that suddenly came to her. "Could it be possible," thought she as they were riding home on the car, "that Mr. Lanning cares for me?" The question was readily answered in the agitation of her heart, although she strove in vain to banish the thought by recalling the days of the past, when she had lived in the hope of being the wife of Bob Larmon. At the time of his death she had promised herself never to allow her thoughts to be centered in any other affection. "But, then," thought she, "I never once thought that Mr. Lanning would stay with us so long."

That little afternoon stroll wrought a great change in the attitude which Eileen now began to assume towards the wealthy boarder. However, she never pretended in any way that she had discovered any change in Lanning's manner; in fact, Ned settled into his old ways, maintaining his usual serious position in his relation with the family. Even old John lost some of his good humor, so changed had he become since the time of Bob's death. There is no doubt that the sad event left its traces on the little home, only occasionally permitting one of those amusing happenings which were so frequent in former times.

Several nights after the Sunday of Eileen's discovery in regard to Ned's feelings, Lanning was sitting alone with the father, the others being occupied in the kitchen. "Mr. Mellody," began Ned, "I would like to mention something to you regarding my position in your house. I think it is only just that you should know about it as soon as possible. About three years ago I came to you as a poor boarder, and I have every reason to feel grateful to all of you for the kindness that has been shown me, an entire stranger."

"See here, Mr. Lanning," interrupted the father, "if you are going to tell me that you are about to leave us, after all the good times we have had here together, I'm going to ask you to write it on a piece of paper, because I don't like to hear of any such thing. It will come better in writing, but I'd rather not hear you are going to do either."

"That is not what I was going to say, Mr. Mellody, but I want your advice in the matter about which I have been thinking. I don't feel that it is fair for me

to be acting the part which I have been acting without first letting you know about it. I have been taking advantage of your kind hospitality in order to deprive you of the dearest possession in your house, and I should regret all the days of my life to be the cause of any sorrow to your good old heart. To be plain with you, I am bold enough to tell you that I love your daughter, Eileen. I place myself entirely in your hands, and give you my word of honor that your advice shall be gladly accepted and followed by me. I have not yet mentioned the matter to her, but I am afraid to promise how long my silence will last."

"Well, Neddy," answered the father, looking thoughtfully at the floor, "you are an honest lad. I like the style of you in speaking out as you do. I don't know how to answer you, but I'll say this much: If you succeed with Eileen as you have done with me this minute, I am afraid that wife and I will be left alone."

"Thank you, Mr. Mellody. I am greatly relieved to feel that my position here is known to you. If you told me that I was not worthy of your daughter's affection, and did not desire me for a friend any longer, I had fully determined to leave the house in peace tomorrow, and place myself where I would do nothing to bring regret to your good hearts after receiving me so kindly when I was an entire stranger. I may not succeed in causing Eileen to care for me, but I am going to try, and it was for that I wanted to speak to you tonight."

The subject was never again discussed between the two, but it was with a clear conscience that Lanning could now try to make the young daughter come to

his way of thinking; but he well knew that his efforts were liable to meet with failure. The two dispositions were almost the exact opposite of each other; Eileen's a cheerful and lively nature, disdaining to take the world seriously except at moments in which she could not very well avoid it. Lanning's, on the other hand, was more inclined to be pensive without, however, being morose, only occasionally asserting the happier side of his nature and then in a most generous way.

It was with new interest that he viewed the little cottage on his stolen visits into the locality, knowing that Eileen was so delighted with it. Indeed, Ned became quite a fixture in the neighborhood in which his little castle was situated, dreaming away of the future, adding a porch here, arranging a little path there, as if he was already the proud owner of the charming spot. The following day he secured an option on its purchase, allowing a little time to see that the papers were properly drawn. The owner was willing to accept five thousand cash, and as a favor requested that Lanning take two years to make the remainder of the payments. Ned, like the rest of us, was only too glad to have a little time, feeling that he could save his money better when he had an object in view, putting aside a portion of his monthly salary for that purpose, without drawing too heavily on his account in the bank.

One evening, about a week before the time set for the closing of the deal, Ned was riding home on the car from his work, picturing to himself the scenes of a dreamy future in which Eileen was a conspicuous figure, when a ragged newsboy came through the car shouting his wares.

The little fellow stopped in front of each passenger, urging them to buy a paper, waiting for an emphatic denial before he would move on to the next. The poor little lad came in front of Lanning, saying, "Paper, Mister?" to which the prospective buyer jokingly remarked, "What's in the paper, my boy?" "I don't know, Mister, 'cause I can't read. Please buy one."

Lanning reached into his pocket and extracted a nickel, which he gave the boy in exchange for the paper. With a "Thank you, sir," the urchin rushed from the car, not knowing that he was the messenger of bad tidings for the man who had just been kind to him. Ned settled back in the seat to glance over the news of the day, but there was only one item which caught his eye, and that was enough to make him shiver with suppressed fear and anger. Seizing his lunch basket, he rushed from the car, and without waiting for it to come to a stop, he swung himself off the rear platform.

Once on the sidewalk, he started down the street, running as fast as his feet could carry him, attracting the attention of hurrying pedestrians, who imagined that the wild runner had suddenly become irresponsible, so fierce was the expression of his face. Block after block passed, as Ned, puffing from his tiring effort, sped through the crowded streets, to the danger of any careless individual who happened to be in the way of receiving a severe bump, only to turn and mumble a word of warning at the retreating figure.

It was not long before Lanning reached the edge of a huge crowd which was growing larger every mo-

ment. To the bystander the scene was bedlam, giving no reason for the extraordinary gathering save that every one seemed to be on the verge of insanity. The electric arc-lights cast a deathly glare on the faces of the excited mob, each one striving to do something desperate, he knew not what. The buzz of uneasiness drowned the rumble of a passing trolley car, so noisy was the agitated crowd. It was a scene which comes as result of one of those terrible bank failures which sets the world wondering at the audacity of frenzied finance.

There were thousands of reports about this and that, each despairing depositor striving to make himself heard, as though that desperate mob could keep silent long enough to listen to anything, let alone reason. Lanning could get no satisfaction from any one; all seemed to be as ignorant as himself. A detail of police stood like statues in front of the bank building, making no pretense of clearing the streets, confining their attention to the preservation of the property. It was with joy that the crowd hailed the reading of a notice to the effect that the doors would be open on the morrow, promising to pay the depositors on request.

These golden hopes induced some of the more willing ones to leave for their homes, while others concluded that their little fortunes were worth the inconvenience of standing on the streets all night. Ned saw there was nothing for him to do by remaining, and started for home, with no charitable feeling in his heart for the scoundrel who could thus rob people of their money.

There were very few hours of sleep for Ned Lanning that night, troubled as he was with the thought of his terrible loss. About four o'clock in the morning he dressed hurriedly and went out, taking a car for the scene of the previous night. The crowd was still there, although it was not so large as the night before. There was more order in its arrangement, as a line of depositors extended half-way down the block, patiently waiting for the hour of nine for the doors to open, according to the promise of the officials.

What scenes of misery! What samples of varied humanity were lined along the block! What stories of hunger and want awaited the poor unfortunates whose all was confined within the walls of that building, which seemed to have lost its formidable and impregnable attitude, to assume the frailty of an air bubble in the hands of a child. How many a home would feel the blow of the dishonest banker; how many a dream of sunshine was overshadowed by the cloud of despair—the making of the financial criminal!

The hour for opening the doors came, but no sign of keeping that promise was evident, while the people became restless after their all-night vigil. It was with a groan that they received word that the government had taken charge, and could give no definite information until the accounts of the institution had been examined, assuring the depositors that everything possible would be done to protect their interests. It was bad news for the anxious waiters, and it was only after the longest time that the line began to break

up, each one going home to spend the day in changing their plans for the future, regretting their misplaced confidence.

It is one of those sad scenes of American life, calling for the enactment of some measure that will safeguard the interest of the people. There is perhaps no country in the world in which money is handled so carelessly, or where the national safeguards are so few, as here in America. It is a strange state of affairs which forces the pauper into the penitentiary for a comparatively trivial offense, while the educated thief can walk off with two or three fortunes entrusted to his care, and in exchange for them, is permitted to spend a few idle years in the government prisons, as though his debts were all paid by a brief separation from the society of his victims.

It is not for us to shout against the danger of banks and banking, for these institutions are essential to our financial life; but the question of justice assumes the slightest taint in permitting men who impose on the confidence of the people to escape with a few years in confinement, leaving them free to go out and seek for new fields in which to take up their frenzied schemes.

Ned Lanning was not the most unfortunate victim of this incident, nor will it ever be known what misery and suffering was brought into some of the homes of the City of New York. There was no thought of work for the rest of the day for our hero; he was too discouraged to think of anything but his loss. He dared not think too much upon the accidental results it would bring about. What would Eileen think when she heard the news?

When he came into the house, about two o'clock, his face showing signs of his worry, Mrs. Mellody was sitting in the parlor at her sewing, and looking up in surprise, she said: "What's the matter, Neddy? You look all tired out. I missed you from the table this morning, and I thought first you were sick in bed, but when I went to your room, and found you gone from the house entirely, I was frightened to death, for fear something had happened to you. Tell me, now, child, what's wrong."

"Mrs. Mellody," answered Lanning, with a choking voice, as he threw himself on a chair, "I'm a ruined man. You know that I had some money in the bank; well, I guess that is wiped out. In other words, the bank is gone up, with twelve thousand dollars of my money. If that isn't enough to give a person the blues, then I'll give up. I am as poor as a tinker just as I sit here."

"Glory be to God, Mr. Lanning, that's bad news entirely. I feel awful bad to hear it. T-w-e-l-v-e t-h-o-u-s-a-n d dollars, and they didn't leave you a cent—the thieves! Sure, Neddy, it's a big loss, and there's good reason for you to look all worn out. But don't you mind, dear, you are just as much welcome here in our little home as you ever were. The Lord knows what is good for us, and there's no telling but you might be after losing your poor soul if you had the spending of that much money. Do you know, Neddy, I like you much better, now that I know you're as poor as ourselves. When I heard that you became rich, I says to John: "I don't like to see the means of temptation in Neddy's hands, so I don't, because lots of money gives

people airs, and they ain't so nice to live with when they get stylish like," and that's the very word I told John; and I know you won't be vexed at me for saying it. But now you are just like the rest of us."

"I believe you are right, Mrs. Mellody, after all, and I guess it is just as well that things turned out as they did; the banker is no bigger thief than—" Here the thought of his own theft came suddenly to his mind, and of the deposit that had been forgiven him, while he continued: "Well, he's bad enough. I am going to make a good start now and earn a respectable living, because then I will have no one to tell me how to spend money I have never earned with my own hands."

The news of Ned's loss, when it became known to the father and Eileen at the supper table, caused them the greatest surprise. Eileen remarked, "Isn't it just awful to think that you cannot buy that little cottage we were looking at. It was just a trifle too high in price now when I think of it."

"That's one of the reasons why I find my loss so hard to bear. What a fool I was not to get that idea sooner, for I would have that much at least! The only house I have now is my trunk, but I am going to save up enough to put an addition on to it."

The little turn caused a laugh, while the father put in: "Now, my boy, you are a real democrat. We'll have good times coming the next election, so don't worry. There's nothing like a little debt or hard pinching to make a man work. I never have any money myself, because the first place I put it is in someone's

because he did not think. If you did not forget and place the temptation in front of us we would not have broken the fast. I'm going to ask Father Kennedy who is to blame the first time I see him."

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Eileen. What are you thinking of, to tell such a thing to the priest. Sure he would kill us all if he knew that he had such pagans in his parish. It only happened once since your father and I were married, so we'll hush it up now. It was only a mistake, and I suppose I will have to take the blame as I always do."

"Mother, dear, we have nothing on the table now but bread and butter. Shall I boil a few eggs? I'm sure we are all starved, and I had such an appetite for a piece of meat."

At the mother's consent Eileen went out to the kitchen to try to discover a substitute for the confiscated meat. It was with a sense of interior satisfaction that John saw her coming in with a number of little dishes, which the mother had in store for Sundays only. Out of satisfaction for that which was taken from him the husband sat at the table as though his appetite would never be appeased, while the wife chatted away with Ned, knowing that there was no chance for sympathy from the others.

There was only one thought in Lanning's mind, now that his real estate investment was so quickly brought to a close, and that thought concerned Eileen's attitude towards him since his dreams had vanished.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A BRIGHTER PROSPECT.

DAY AFTER DAY Lanning cheered himself with the hope of hearing that his money was not entirely lost, feeling that even a small portion of it would be joyfully received. There was nothing encouraging in sight, no matter how often he called at the bank. The smiling faces of the officials which once greeted him as he handed them his well-filled purse, were now nowhere to be seen, while the fortress-like gates which were built to assure the innocent depositor against the danger of outside robbers, now served no other purpose than to prevent the entrance of those who had every right to admission.

One evening when Lanning came home, he found a letter from the bank officials, which he recognized by the initials in the upper corner of the envelope. He lost no time in tearing it open, knowing that it was the final accounting for the money he had lost in the crash. The letter went on to state, that owing to the bad condition of the finances of the bank, it was found impossible to pay the depositors more than thirty cents on the dollar. The news made Lanning feel like a child, so happy was he to know that he was not left in entire poverty.

The letter was passed around the table, until each one had been assured of its contents, when Ned interposed, "Mr. Mellody, I am so glad to get this little share of my belongings, that I feel as though nothing had happened at all." Then turning to Eileen who was rejoiced to see him so happy, he said, "Eileen, I guess there is yet a chance to land that little cottage. Three thousand six hundred dollars is not so bad after all. I had begun to hate the sight of that little place; knowing how near I was to being its owner. But now I think I will call over and see it again some of these days; won't you come along with me?"

"Yes, Mr. Lanning, I shall be glad to go and look it over once more. I felt so bad when I remembered the way you were planning the last time we were there. Do you think the owner will be willing to come to easier terms?"

"Oh, I guess we can arrange that part of it. I am sure he will give me a little more time when he knows the circumstances. I wish the present renters would hurry and move out of it; I don't like to see it going to ruin. To hear me talk, one would think that I owned it already!"

"Well, Ned," interrupted the father, "you have just about enough now to make you feel comfortable. Too much is plenty, as we used to say long ago, and plenty is too much in many cases. A mule without a load gets 'rambunxious,' so I don't see why you can't take the house and carry a little debt. It will give you something to work for. I was not so glad to see my

own little mortgage taken off, because I know that there's no telling when I may go off on a tear, feeling there's no halter on me."

"The truth for you, John," put in Mrs. Mellody, "I can tell you that you ain't as careful with your clothes these days as you used to be. You never hang up your things any more. I'm always picking up your belongings of a Monday morning. There is one reason I have in my mind for thinking you are becoming extravagant, and that's the way you are smoking up the Christmas cigars I bought for you; the ordinary kind are not good enough for your lordship any more."

"Mary dear, you are forgetting your promise not to scold me during Lent, and here we are near the end, and I can count a dozen or more tongue thrashings you gave me. There is only one remark I must make and that is, that I have been putting a penance on myself in using those cigars you have in mind. I don't want to be saying anything against your present, but I have used them for the collectors and book agents so they will never call around here again."

"Is that where them beautiful cigars are going? Is that what I bought them for? Well, John Mellody, when Mary Ryan ever buys the likes of you another present for Christmas, she'll be badly in need of something else to do."

"Don't speak that way, mother," said Eileen, seeing the father and Ned enjoying the joke about the cigars, "Father does not mean one word of it. He's only teasing you. Mr. Lanning told us how your brother John enjoyed them over in Ireland, and you always said he was a good judge of everything."

The reference to the brother brought a roar of laughter from the father, who had forced Ned to repeat the story a half dozen times or more on previous occasions. Mrs. Mellody stood up from the table in no pleasant frame of mind, knowing that the best place for her was in the kitchen, determined as she was to avoid any words on the subject.

The season of Lent was fast coming to a close, bringing with it the sad memory of the solemn occasion of the death and burial of the Saviour of the world. The evenings of the last week were spent at the church, where that beautiful though heart-rending story of the sacred passion is studied in the "Way of the Cross." There is perhaps no better sermon ever preached, no matter how eloquent the priestly orator, than is found in the simple account of the last days of Christ's life on earth. The whole Mellody family had been faithful attendants at these evening devotions during the penitential season, and it was with a sense of spiritual satisfaction that they welcomed the glorious Easter now near at hand.

The morning in question was cloudy and damp, when the Mellodys were on their way to church; the weather being in no way conducive to appreciating the nature of the occasion. However, the holy atmosphere of the church tended to arouse a proper sense of joy and happiness for which the feast called. There is an indescribable feeling of peace and contentment which takes possession of the Christian heart on this auspicious occasion, tasting somewhat of the pleasure of Christmas.

Ned Lanning entered into the spirit of the feast, giving expression to his sentiments during the holy Mass, as he reflected upon the days in the dark past, when all the world seemed arid and soulless. What a more cheerful view he now took of everything, feeling in his soul that he was no longer a stranger to his God! As he gazed into the shadows of the years gone by, he saw himself lost in the mire of indifference, struggling in vain against the influence of a lesser man. How well had God brought him out from the night of his own ignorance, to bestow upon him all the blessings of which he had proved himself so unworthy! If ever the story of the resurrection was exemplified in a human being, Lanning knew it was in himself; and it was this thought which filled his heart with thanksgiving on Easter Sunday morning.

Before the end of the Mass, the sun came out in all its splendor, bursting through the stained glass windows as a token of the joy that must have prevailed in the court of heaven. The surprising change in the weather made everyone feel its cheerful influence, and it was with glad hearts that Ned and his friends wended their way home from church. It was with a sense of admiration and pleasure that the old folks studied Ned and Eileen as they walked along in front of them.

In the afternoon of the same day, the two young people went out for the purpose of once more looking at the little home which had so nearly become a phantom of Lanning's dream; and who knows, but also of Eileen's. They strolled along, laughing and chatting as though they had not a care in the bright world. To

the passing stranger they gave the impression of being two lovers, and perhaps the guess was not far wrong, even though they had not yet expressed any word in this regard.

As they walked back and forth on the opposite side of the street gazing wistfully at the spot across the way, Ned remarked to his companion, "Eileen, I have made sure of my money this time, because I have drawn it out of the bank. I've come to a reasonable agreement with the owner, and before next Sunday, I'm going to be an owner myself. Do you know, Eileen," he continued while he observed her closely, "I am anxious to start that little garden; I can picture the flowers in it now; but I need some one to teach me how to manage it. Do you think you could spare a little time to help me?"

"Why, Mr. Lanning, I am sure I would be glad to help you, but I don't know the first principles about gardening, so I could hardly accept your offer."

They were just entering the shade of a large oak tree in the park, where Ned suggested taking advantage of a seat that stood near at hand, while he continued to speak, "Then why not go in partnership, surely the two of us ought to be able to learn something from our work. I could do the digging and all the hard work, while you could see to the planting."

"I am afraid, Mr. Lanning, that I should only be in the way; besides, I would be able to help you only on Sundays, and you know we should not work on that day."

"Come now, Eileen, can't you think out some plan or other so we can make a success of this little home."

A faint blush suffused the face of the young girl as she saw the trend of the conversation, feeling that she guessed the meaning of her companion's words. She sought, however, to ward off the moment of happiness as long as possible; satisfying herself with the joy which came with the anticipation. In answer to her last remark Ned continued, "I don't want to buy that place simply to let it to renters; I want to live in it myself, because then I should feel that it was properly taken care of. If you cannot find a way to help me, I am afraid I shall be obliged to give up the idea of buying it entirely."

"Oh, no, Mr. Lanning, I would be sorry to see you give it up, all on my account, it is too pretty a little home to give up for so trivial a reason. Perhaps we—I mean you—could let the garden go for awhile, at least until you secure the place, and then later on, I might find a way to help you with it."

"I wish you had continued to say that 'we,' said Lanning, seizing her hand ardently in his, "it sounds so sweet to my ears. Eileen, girl, I love you, and I want you to be my gardener for life."

She drew her hand slowly from his, tapping the ground at her feet with the end of her parasol, while Ned continued, "You will never know, Eileen, what that bank failure meant to me, shutting out as it did the hope of pleasing the girl I love; taking from me the means of securing that little home, when I knew that your heart was in it as well as mine. Tell me, Eileen, if I can entertain the slightest hope to have you care for me; give me one word of encouragement and I shall be the happiest man in the world."

Miss Mellody sat in painful silence, not even daring to let him see her face. The pleasure which she had anticipated was not so sweet as her heart longed for; it suddenly resolved itself into a cruel reality, placing her on the verge of a situation which demanded a vital decision. It was only then that she realized that she was no longer a child. It was a relief to her mind to hear her companion once more break the silence.

"Eileen, I will be honest with you and admit that I have not acted just right by taking advantage of your parents' hospitality to strive to gain your affection. I realized that I was wrong in staying in your home when my heart began to tell me that I loved you; but I have spoken to your father about the matter and he would not listen to my proposal to seek another boarding place. I know I am not the most cheerful sort of a companion for a good little wife, but I am not one who cannot learn. There is only one thing I now ask of you, and that is the assurance that you will give me a fair chance. I would not want you to come to such a serious decision in a moment; but you can at least assure me that I am not unworthy of aspiring to your affection. Shall I buy that little home?"

"Well, Mr. Lanning, it would make a delightful little home. Come, let us return; mother will be waiting for us."

"Eileen, girl, I'm happy. Once I have the home, I think the gardener will take pity on me, and come to help, seeing what a failure I will be. The happy days of spring are here now, and I must begin work soon."

That afternoon was a happy one indeed for Ned Lanning, realizing as he did, that there was some hope

that he could win Eileen. True, there had been nothing definite in her response, but it was not hard for him to see that time would be his friend; that the future was not without its most sanguine promises. The little cottage changed owners, as was evident from the departure of the occupants, while the balmy spring evenings saw a solitary worker exploring every little corner of his realm, taking a mental invoice of every tiny twig that peeped from the bursting buds.

Eileen seemed to have forgotten all about the existence of Lanning's domain, nor did she once inquire how the agricultural experiments were going on, fearing that Ned would again mention the matter which had caused her so many thoughtful moments. In fact, she was glad that he spent so many of his evenings over in the garden of his cozy possession, giving her more chance to hold many a confidential chat with her mother, to which the father was not admitted, in punishment for his previous knowledge of Lanning's secret.

The warm days of summer were coming on, bringing with them the flower-scented breezes of verdant nature; filling the parks and shaded streets with evening strollers. Ned and Eileen taking advantage of the invitation of the pleasant evening, started out for a walk. Without his companion's knowledge, they went around by a circuitous route until Eileen suddenly found that they were standing in front of the object of Ned's interest. The new coat of paint had concealed its identity from the eyes of the unsuspecting girl. Immediately on seeing it, she exclaimed, "Oh, my, how pretty it looks, and you never told me you had made

any changes. You have given me a surprise, indeed."

"I am so glad you are pleased Eileen. Come in and see the inside, I think you will like its arrangement."

The two entered; Eileen expecting to find the bare rooms. It was with no unfeigned surprise that she said, "Well, if this is not cozy! Why, it is all furnished, Mr. Lanning; when did you have all this done,—and so tasty, too. I must congratulate you. I am afraid I could not have done so well. Are you sure there is no one living here; you must be only teasing me. The renters cannot have gone yet."

"No, Eileen, this is all mine, and if you will only say the word, it is all yours. I have worked hard to fit this little home for you, but if I were to work for a hundred years, I would not yet be satisfied, knowing that it could not be too good for the girl I love."

The two had been standing beside each other, while Eileen, aware that she could no longer avoid the issue, stood with her head bent in serious thought. The ardent look in Ned's face betrayed the sincerity of his heart. "Come now, Eileen, can't you relieve my anxiety? Cannot I hope for the word which will make me the proudest man in the whole world? If you refuse me and tell me not to mention the matter to you ever again, I will know that you have the best reason possible for your act; but it will kill the brightest hopes of my life. I know I am presumptuous to be thus asking your affection; but it is because I am willing to try my best to make you happy. Say just one of two words, 'Yes,' or 'No,' and I will promise never to trouble you again with my selfish request."

Eileen, whose heart was filled with the most conflicting thoughts as to what the future might have in store for her, stood in a silence which was becoming oppressive to both. At last she raised her eyes to Lanning's, and gently placed her hand in his—the mute expression of her answer. There on the threshold of the little home they sealed the bond which was to make them companions on the road to an eternal future. There was one thought in Ned's mind as he stood there with the girl of his heart, that was, the knowledge that there was a two-fold bond uniting them—one of love, and the other the bond of religion, which was wanting in the marriage of his own good parents, and for which he, the son, was obliged to suffer. Truly an undesirable inheritance.

The month of June came around with its scented flowers and happy days, coaxing the hypocondriacs from their sombre musings into the cheerful sunshine, and educating them to believe that the world is not so bad after all, with a good God arranging things for the best. The Mellody family had not known such joy in years, mindful as they were of the approaching wedding of Eileen and Ned Lanning. For the past month or so Mrs. Mellody was not in the best of humor for callers, taken up as she was with the work of sewing and arranging for the great event.

Poor old John dared not say a word or ask a civil question, knowing well what was in store for him were he to disturb the busy moments of his wife; so he contented himself as best he could, trying to confine his person in the most impossible corners, as though he were an entire stranger, who could have no

interest in the proceedings. The only time his existence was recognized was when he was called to admire, without daring to touch, the sacred wedding gown, which no one in the world could make but Mary Mellody. Of course, there was nothing but the highest praise and admiration on his lips for his wife's skillful effort, well knowing the danger of thinking otherwise.

The anniversary of the old folks' wedding happened along about a week before the day set for Eileen's marriage. The word went out from the mistress of the house to the willing husband not to dare breathe a word about it to the "children," because there was no time for anything but sewing. One evening when the parents were enjoying the nature of the day in their own quiet way, rejoicing over the fact that the two young people knew nothing about the anniversary, the door was suddenly burst open to admit a line of neighbors, each with a precious bundle in her arm. The mother was half-mad to have them come in and find her sewing on Eileen's wedding gown, begrudging them a sight of such a precious article.

When she recovered from her surprise, she hastily gathered up the pieces around the floor and put them carefully into her apron and handed them to John to put away, while she turned her attention to the visitors, at the head of whom stood Mrs. Stanton. There were not half enough chairs to accommodate them all, so they arranged themselves as best they could. John succeeded in finding the means of making himself more presentable, not even forgetting to don his Sunday tie, while his wife contented herself with a clean apron.

When the semblance of silence at last prevailed, which, by the way, was caused by a signal from Mrs. Stanton, the charmer of the evening, a large rocker was solemnly carried in from the hall and placed in the middle of the room. The wrapping was still on it, lest any uncouth person should even suspect its newness, but the price tag had been carefully removed in order to prevent the escape of any unnecessary information in that regard. Giving her gorgeous silk dress a few twitches, and assuring herself of the attention of the audience by casting a warning look around the room, Mrs. Stanton with much ceremony arose from her chair. With a tone bordering on the verge of manly oratory, but still retaining the semblance of ladylike demeanor, she began to deliver an eloquent effusion of her own composition.

The effusion in question was carefully written on perfumed paper, and until the last minute was held in the hand of the local oratrix, who had fully intended to read her speech from the manuscript. As she stood up, however, and glanced around the line of faces in the room, her eye rested on Jane Smigly, a neighbor who never tired of calling Mrs. Stanton's prowess into question. "Here," thought the speaker, "I have a chance to show her that I am educated. I won't give her the satisfaction of seeing me use my paper. I'm so glad I learned the piece off by heart." Hiding the paper in her handkerchief and placing both on the chair behind her, she began.

"My dear"—here she was obliged to clear her throat, angry with herself for not testing her voice on the way over. "My dear Mr. and Mrs. Mellody, we

have come here tonight to show the 'steem and good will we have for our old neighbors." (Here some of the women wondered if the word "old" was not a trifle dangerous, as though the speaker herself was such a charming type of youth. "There has never been no one such good and peaceful people as you have been." ("My, what horrid grammar she is using; I knew she would not do it well.")

The speech was here interrupted by one of the audience, who was suddenly taken with a fit of coughing. With a frown of no ordinary meaning and dimensions, Mrs. Stanton attempted to continue her oration. Her face became a shade paler when she realized that her memory refused to help her. Try as she would, the next word would not come to her. Hoping for the best, she bravely went on, depending upon her ability to extemporize. "I have been selected to 'resent a little present we have brung to you—this oak rocker. You do not deserve such an ins'nificant thing, but our hearts is bigger than the rocker, and we would like it to be more. I have always loved Mr. and Mrs. Mellody, because they was always good neighbors, and we hope they will always be in our midst. We hope that you both will have many more twentieth anniversaties and that we can all be here like tonight. This life is full of clouds, but we must not forget that every silver lining—I mean that every cloud has its lining. Our neighborhood are proud to have folks like you two and we don't want you to ever move. There is such few good people in our midst, that we would hate to lose the Mellodys. We are all getting old, but we must console ourselves with the beautiful thought,

that the older the violin the better the melody." (There was the faintest sound of a titter at this juncture from some untutored person, but it was enough to warn the speaker that she was not safe in talking longer, as her vocabulary was giving out.) "I here 'resent you this little token of my—I mean our regard." Here she extracted a slip of paper on which was written the closing ode—too sweet to be left to the dangers of mere memory work.

> "We hope you'll live for many years,
> Devoid of sadness and of tears."

The applause was tremendous, to which the orator responded with a remarkable bow, as though the party was intended for her sole benefit. Mrs. Stanton felt that her effort was a wonderful success, especially on seeing some of the women hiding a telltale tear, who, she supposed, had succumbed to the sweetness of her words.

There was no formal response from Mrs. Mellody, who, as head of the house, took it upon herself to say, "We thank you all. We want you to make yourselves right at home." During all the happenings, poor old John sat beside his wife, without a word, knowing that he was in for the work of carrying chairs and getting wood for the kitchen stove, which of course the visiting ladies could never do. The noise of the moving company enabled him to heave an audible sigh of resignation to the inevitable, without it being noticed.

Mrs. Mellody's "make yourselves at home" was accepted by the visitors in the fullest sense of the word, while from mysterious bundles appeared every imag-

inable sort of a cake, each one thinking that she was the only person thoughtful enough to bring such a necessary article. If John was making himself generally useful, he did it without the least notice or objection on the part of the gracious company; but if Mrs. Mellody raised her little finger there was an immediate general request that she, as the honored one of the evening, should not do one thing; so she was forced to content herself where she was, giving her the appearance of an invalid.

It was with no feeling of indifference that the lady of the house saw the visitors making so free as to invade the sacred precincts of her pantry, in which she was sure she had left everything untidy and in disorder. But what could she do when she herself gave them the invitation, so she resigned herself to the situation, satisfied in keeping an eye on the proceedings. Mrs. Stanton of course was the marshal of the whole affair, and directed the arranging of the table and the places for the different ladies. While John was sent off to the store for some necessary article, his wife sat, a most unwilling prisoner in the chains which formality had placed upon her. The only consolation which the poor woman had was the thought, that the Irish plate and the good spoons were under lock and key. If there was any criticism passed on her household possessions she did not hear it, but an occasional word of praise for a certain article was always spoken in no under tone.

The old clock on the mantle chimed out the hour of ten in tones not near loud enough for Mrs. Mellody, but it was with a real sigh of relief that she saw the visitors

take the hint and start for home. The last one to shake the hand of Mrs. Mellody was Susan Stanton, who whispered as she was going out of the door, "Mary, I thought you would like this little treat; it wasn't very much, but I'm always glad to show my love for my neighbors." With a kiss that felt like a real favor coming from Mrs. Stanton, she went out into the night, leaving the tired Mrs. Mellody to the company of her thoughts.

The house was a sight, with chairs and dishes scattered all over it, but she started in right and left to bring some sort of order into the scene. Turning to the husband, who was too sleepy to have a clear idea, she said, "Wait until I see Eileen; she's the rattlebox that went around among the neighbors telling them how old I am getting. She will have to wash every one of these dishes tomorrow for her cuteness. It makes me mad to have them all see what kind of goods is in the wedding gown."

"Arrah, Mary, the poor chiid was only trying to make us happy by getting up the little party. It's a wonder they don't come home soon now, because Ned told me they were going to call on a friend of his."

The word was hardly out of his mouth when Lanning and Eileen walked in, laughing at the parents in the midst of the evening's ruin. The laugh made the mother frown as she said, "Now, miss, you see what you have done; the wedding dress will never be ready in time, and I wanted to do so much on it tonight."

"Why, mother," answered the daughter, pretending not to notice her mother's displeasure, "where did

you get this beautiful rocker? I am afraid we will have to steal it for our little home."

"You'll do nothing of the sort, daughter, just for not telling me the neighbors were coming tonight, and the house not fit to live in."

Lanning, who had slipped quietly upstairs, now came in with the covered painting, which he placed against the wall, still leaving it concealed. The other three stood in wonderment at his actions. Without a word he arranged three chairs in front of the mysterious object, and, taking each by the arm, he seated them, saying, "I have a little surprise for you, Mr. and Mrs. Mellody, and I hope you will like it. I prepared it especially for your anniversary." With that he suddenly uncovered the painting on which he had been secretly working, and exposed it to the view of his friends.

"Glory be to God, Neddy, it's the Blessed Mother. Where did you get that grand picture? And is that for us? You must have paid a big pile of money for that, and it's a shame for the likes of us poor folks to be having such a fine painting in the house."

"I painted that all for you as a small return for your kindness to me. I never told you I was at one time engaged in such work entirely. I have become a little rusty, so I decided to do some practicing in my leisure moments, but I had to work hard to get it finished for this great occasion. I thought you would be delighted to have it."

"Delighted? Why, it's the proud woman I am this blessed night. Neddy, you could not give me anything nicer if I was to have my choice of all the pres-

ents in New York. I'm afraid Father Kennedy will be after stealing it from me when he sees it. It's the proud mother you'd have if she were alive this day. And just to think we never knew that we had an artist in the house with us."

The old clock chimed the hour of eleven as she was talking, causing her to exclaim, "Would you look at the hour it is? Come, Eileen, give me a hand with the dishes; it'll be morning before we know it. John, poor man, you will be dead with the sleep. I'd never forgive you, Eileen, for bringing in the neighbors to keep us up till this hour of the night, if Neddy were not so good as to give us that grand picture. For his sake, I'll not say one word to you."

The house was soon wrapt in silence save for an occasional snore from the neighborhood of John's room, where he found the rest which he so justly merited after the strenuous effort in celebrating the anniversary of his wedding.

CHAPTER XIX.

"LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER."

ONE MORNING bright and early, long before the city was awake, Mrs. Mellody was up and stirring, stealing around quietly as she busied herself in arranging things for the event which meant so much for Ned Lanning and Eileen Mellody. As she picked up the wedding veil which was to adorn her daughter's head that day, her thoughts rushed back to the morning of her own wedding. Looking through the mist of years, she felt that the grace of God had been with her and her family of four good children. Her three boys had married well and were facing the world, fortified with a good religious training, and the poor mother thanked God for it. It now remained for her own Eileen to face the trials and troubles of the world, with what success, God alone could tell. If there is any soul-born prayer in this world which is attuned to the harmony of heaven, it is the prayer of a mother for the welfare of a child she is about to lose.

Silently and lovingly the good woman prepared the garments and adornments of her daughter, softly murmuring the hopes and wishes of her motherly heart. There was joy in the thought that she was not entrusting her child to a man whose religion differed from her own; but whose respect for the marriage bond was

prompted by the law of God and not by the laws of men. She may not have been able to give a dissertation on the evils of divorce, but she knew full well the cause of the misery and sadness in many of the homes around her. Too often had she seen the scourge called divorce walk into the homes of her non-Catholic neighbors and murder their very souls. "Thanks be to God," said she, "Eileen will never know that horror."

How sadly true, dear reader, is the fact that this great Republic in which we live has made friends with the ravager of hearts and homes, called divorce. In one year these United States have granted more divorces than all the countries of Europe combined. Every time the clock strikes the quarter hour we have the assurance of American statistics that the blunted sword of justice has just severed the heaven-forged bond of another marriage; that another father and mother have sacrificed themselves and their little ones on the altar of liberty. The stroke of the quarter hour not only records every new divorce, but also forcibly reminds us that we have moved one step nearer to our national doom; that another pillar has been torn from under the building of social welfare. When that structure falls to the ground, the American flag will lie in the dust. The man who will be able to stem the tide of divorce will be the savior of his country, but let him act before it is too late.

Mrs. Mellody thanked her God for the assurance that such an evil was spared her daughter. The thought that she must lose her child, however, or at least be separated from her, soon brought the tears to her eyes,

but her sad reveries were suddenly disturbed on hearing the other members of the family stirring in their rooms.

Everything was now ready and in its place, not even excepting the little pearl rosary which Eileen held at her first communion. The father was left entirely to his own resources in preparing himself for the hour of the wedding, the mother being occupied exclusively in the sacred duty of vesting the bride. It was with much difficulty that the poor woman concealed her ungovernable tears from the eye of her child. The final touch came when the wedding veil was to be arranged. So much time did the mother spend in fastening it that Eileen was forced to remark, "Why, mother dear, is it necessary to put so many pins in it? I am afraid it will never come off again if you fasten it any more."

"Child, dear," answered the mother, "I would wish for nothing better, for then my pet's whole life would be one grand wedding day, but then we must not expect that until we are in heaven. I am putting so many pins in the veil to make sure that nothing will disturb you on this happy day. There now, child, you look as sweet as an angel. May our dear Lord keep you always as good as you are today, and may the Blessed Mother teach my little Eileen how to be a good wife. I could cry my eyes out for happiness this blessed day, for it's good reason I have to be proud of my own little girl."

Eileen, who was pleased to see her so reconciled to their separation, gently took her mother's face between her white-gloved hands and pressed a tender

kiss on her lips, saying, "You've been a good mother to Eileen, and I hope I'll have you near me all the time to show me how to be good. Poor papa, I wonder if he will be very lonesome for his little girl; it makes me feel so bad to be leaving home." These last words were almost the cause of a flood of tears, but the mother checked them by saying:

"Come now, child, I don't want to see the sign of a tear on your face, and this your wedding day. It's happy you ought to be in having a fine Catholic young man like Neddy for a husband. But sure, it must be a lot that I think of him to be giving him my own Eileen. Now mind what I told you, daughter, not a tear, and be sure to keep your hands from your face for fear you'd spoil it, and above all, be sure and don't crush your wedding dress. The very last word I have for you now, daughter, before I let you out of my hands, is to remember your father and your mother when you receive our blessed Lord in Communion; God knows, we'll not forget our own little Eileen. I am afraid we will be a bit selfish in asking God for all the blessings we can think of." As she finished speaking, Mrs. Mellody, putting her head out of the room, called to John, who was sitting in the corner trying to be as cheerful as the thought of losing his daughter permitted: "John dear, come and take a look at your little girl, but don't dare put a finger on her for fear of mussing her gown."

The poor man could not hold back his tears when he thought that this was the last time he could claim her as his own, and to the extreme horror of his wife, he seized his daughter in his arms and kissed her

ardently, and without a word walked out of the room. The child, who could not bear to see her father weeping, now gave in to the flood of tears against which the mother had been trying to guard the whole morning. In a few moments, however, Eileen was ushered into the parlor, where the happy groom and the rest of the bridal party awaited her coming.

Just as the carriage turned into the avenue leading to the door of Saint Mary's church the chimes in the church belfry awakened the surrounding atmosphere with their mellifluous message, reminding God's children that the sweet incense of adoration was about to ascend to the thrown of their Creator. The harmony of the bells aroused in the heart of Eileen a strange feeling of happiness, such as she had not known since the day she wore her first bridal wreath and veil, when receiving her first holy Communion.

The solemn tones of the great organ burst into a joyous welcome as the bridal party entered the church door and slowly approached the altar of God. The twinkling candle lights and the profusion of flowers proclaimed to the spectator that the occasion of sacred marriage is a feast most dear to the heart of Christ's church. She considers no treasured ornament too precious, no incense too sweet, no vestal mantle too gorgeous to grace the ceremony of Catholic marriage. If the children of irreligion can satisfy themselves with the soulless formality of a civil contract amid the cheerless surroundings of a business office, it is not so with the children of the Catholic church, to whom marriage is not merely a contract but also a holy sacrament.

As Father Kennedy stood before the altar his gray hair became silvered in the glow of the candles, while his face reflected the happiness of his inmost soul arising from the thought that he was about to present to their God, the vows of another husband and wife. How gladly did Ned and Eileen kneel at the feet of their priest and friend to pronounce the words which were to unite them in the eyes of God and man! "Until death do us part"—the words seemed to find echo in the very soul of Eileen as she solemnly repeated them after the priest, reminding her that death alone could come between her husband and herself. If the seal of eternity was now placed upon the pledge of their hearts, it was eternity alone that could sever the bond which heaven itself had forged.

There is no doubt that the combined appeal of the newly-made husband and wife has a most powerful influence upon the generosity of God; that the sentiments of hope and love that well in those two hearts command the very treasures of heaven at the moment of sacred marriage. The tears of gratitude and happiness flowed silently from the eyes of the young bride as she pronounced the last words of her marriage vow.

To them it seemed but as a moment when they returned to their places to await the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. If the mind of Ned Lanning did not closely follow the ceremony of the Mass, it was because he could not help looking back along the path which he had traveled, to reflect upon the goodness of his Creator and upon his own unworthiness. The signal at the consecration soon awakened him from his distraction, and with bowed head he pictured to

himself the offering of his crucified Saviour. The facility with which his imagination presented the scenes of the sufferings of a dying Christ arose from the fact that the figure of Christ rested on the canvas of a darker day. The sin of a thoughtless moment was ever recurring to him, even though the hand of a generous God had guided him from the shadow of the desert and enabled him to drink at the oasis of a Saviour's love.

When the Mass came to a close, Father Kennedy turned to the newly-married couple and said:

"My dear children, you are now united before God and man as husband and wife. There is nothing in this world which can break the bond which makes you 'two in one flesh.' The road of life is now open before you and the dawn of eternity will tell whether you have utilized the many graces which God has this day placed in your hands.

"The world in which we live is made of sunshine and shadow, having its joys and its sorrows, and it is for the purpose of meeting these conditions with a mutual Christian love and resignation that you stand here this morning as husband and wife. You may, on your journey towards eternity, find that the cross becomes a little heavy, but it is with this expectation that you have just sealed the pledges of Catholic marriage.

"Do not, my dear children, expect to find perfection in each other, nor rashly condemn the failings that constant association may reveal to you, because in so doing you will forget that Christ this morning asks you to love one another as He has loved His

Church. When the husband finds the sympathy of the world growing cold, and the clouds of sorrow and trouble hang heavy upon him, let the wife be to him as a solace and a comfort, healing the wounds of the battle with her kindness and Christ-like love. Should the wife grow weary and careworn in her task, let the husband extend to her the hand of strength and cheerfulness, remembering that God has placed her welfare in his hands and to God he must answer.

"Seek not the applause or the esteem of men, for it soon passes as the cloud in the sky. Love God with your single heart and keep His image ever enshrined therein, for in so doing your threshold will always be holy and clean. You are now at the gate of life, about to begin your pilgrimage, but you are not alone in your journey—you have taken Christ with you. If ever you part from Him you will surely lose your way. You have admitted Him to your company this morning when you received Him in holy Communion, not only for the nourishment of your souls but also as a crucified witness to the pledges which you have exchanged at His altar.

"Look not to the beauty of the body, regard only the beauty of the soul, for the charm of the former fades only too quickly, while the soul never grows old. If sickness or disease should lay its finger on one, against which, may God guard you, let the companion in health never grow weary in cooling the fevered brow. In riches and in poverty, in joy or sadness, in starvation or in plenty, be ever faithful to one another, sharing together the bitter and the sweet of life. Let Christ be ever your mutual companion

throughout the day and the night; let Him be your guide and your counsellor and I can assure you that the burden of life will be as the sweetest yoke; that your sorrow shall be but disguised happiness, and that when the sunset of life shall come upon you, it will be but the dawn of an eternal union with God, where you shall stand as you stand today—husband and wife. May God bless you."

The bright June sunlight seemed to lend a refreshing cheerfulness to the surroundings as the young couple left the portals of Saint Mary's Church and entered their carriage. The tardy promises of spring were now reaching their generous fulfillment in the verdant foliage of the trees, while the factory-tainted atmosphere of the busy city seemed to bear the scent of the meadow. To the happy hearts of Ned and Eileen, the offerings of nature were most welcome indeed.

The nature of the reception which awaited the young couple when they arrived at home we will leave to the reader's imagination, save to remark, that the Mellody home was the center of a quiet and happy little gathering, where the parental hopes and blessings were in abundance. The happy moments fled only too quickly amid the peaceful surroundings of the old home, while darkness settled over the outside world almost before they realized it.

One evening, about three months after their happy wedding, Ned and Eileen were sitting in the front room of their own little cottage, exchanging the reminiscences of the past. Lanning was seated before a large canvas, etching the outlines of a painting of the "Cruci-

fixion," which he intended to present to Father Kennedy as a remembrance of their wedding day. Our young friend had returned to his art-work, and was in the employment of a large Catholic firm, who, realizing the value of his brush, felt the necessity of engaging him at a very comfortable salary. Owing to the fact that he could do much of his work at home, Ned was more than happy when he was able to have his young wife at his side.

As the two sat chatting before the work which Ned's brush was slowly bringing into color, Eileen remarked: "Ned, I do not see how you can paint those figures so well and so lifelike without having some model from which to copy. I wish I could have such a picture of our Lord always in my mind, for then I could not help being good, thinking always of how Christ suffered for me."

"Eileen, dear, I am not painting this picture without the help of a model, because the model is fixed so indelibly in my mind that I shall never forget it. I can see the picture from which I am making this copy almost as clearly as I see you here at my side. There is a wonderful story connected with it, and some day, when you are tired and lonesome, I am going to tell you all about it; but do not ask me for the secret now. If there is any picture in which I can ever hope to reach that perfection which brings worldly fame, I am sure it will be found in this very model. However, there is no room in my heart just now for the opinion of the world, so long as I have the love of the best little wife in the land."

As Ned finished his remark he followed his young wife into the dining room, where the two happy children sat down to supper, amusing themselves with little plans and schemes for the future improvement of their miniature castle. The window of the room looked out upon the flowers that waved their heads to and fro in the garden as though nodding their thanks to the happy inmates inside, while the golden glow of the evening sun fell silently across the floor, reminding them that the days of happiness and contentment are all too fleeting.

FINIS.